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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at 10 a.m.

Senate

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2021

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the Honorable MICHAEL BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, You rule forever. Lord, we see change and decay in our world, but Your power and might continue to sustain us. Great is Your faithfulness. You remain our shelter by day and defense by night.

Today, surround our lawmakers with Your generous blessings. As they seek to honor You, provide them with the wisdom to keep our Nation strong. Lord, bless them with Your compassion, mercy, and love as You continue to answer their prayers.

We pray in Your strong Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, August 9, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable MICHAEL F. BENNET, a Senator from the State of Colorado, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. BENNET thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INVESTING IN A NEW VISION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SURFACE TRANSPORTATION IN AMERICA ACT—Resumed

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 3684, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3684) to authorize funds for Federal-aid highways, highway safety programs, and transit programs, and for other purposes.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

H.R. 3684

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, now, it may have taken all weekend, but the Senate is now finally on the precipice of passing major bipartisan infrastructure legislation.

Last night, an overwhelming bipartisan majority of Senators voted to surmount the final few procedural hurdles and put the bill on a glidepath for passage tomorrow morning. The bill will represent a substantial downpayment toward the level of infrastructure investment our country needs, and for the first time, the Senate has come together around such a package in decades. I will have more to say about it before final passage.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Now, Mr. President, all summer, I have spoken about how the Senate would proceed along two tracks when it came to infrastructure: the bipartisan bill we will vote on tomorrow as well as the budget reconciliation bill that will allow Democrats to make historic investments in American jobs, American families, and efforts to reverse climate change.

In order to achieve such an ambitious legislative effort, I laid out two clear goals for this summer work period: pass the bipartisan bill and a budget resolution to set up the second track of our process before we leave for August recess.

Many folks called that two-track process unrealistic. Many others said it

• This “buller” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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is unachievable on such a short timeline and in such a slow-moving Chamber. But we have managed to steer two trains at the same time. There have been some bumps. There have been some delays. But the Senate is on track to finish both tracks.

Earlier this summer, I suggested the two-track strategy to President Biden and Speaker PELOSI. We all agreed it was the best way to move forward, and we are working in concert to make it happen.

This morning, Senate Democrats unveiled our budget resolution with reconciliation instructions, which is the first step in unlocking the legislative process for a budget reconciliation bill later this year.

Several Members—many Members—had a hand in crafting this package. We worked closely with our committee chairs, but I want to especially thank the chair of the Budget Committee, Senator SANDERS. He kept his nose to the grindstone and led our caucus on the budget. He always kept the thoughts and needs of American workers and families at the top of his mind. As a result, the Democratic budget will be the most significant legislation for American families since the era of the New Deal and the Great Society. It is big, bold change—the kind of change America thirsts for.

I want to thank other members of the Budget Committee, like Senator WARNER, who worked closely with the White House and Chairman SANDERS to develop a framework, and Senators MURRAY and WYDEN and STABENOW and WHITEHOUSE and MERKLEY and KAINE and VAN HOLLEN and LUJÁN and PADILLA, all of whom came together, even though each had different views on different issues, to produce this result, and a great result it is.

I want American families to understand what this legislation will mean for them—four simple things to keep in mind. I am borrowing Senator STABENOW's chart for this. It will lower costs for Americans, it will cut taxes for American families, it will create millions of jobs while tackling the climate crisis, and it will be paid for by the wealthy paying their fair share. These are four goals. The American people support every one of them overwhelmingly.

In all phases, we will concentrate on communities that have been too often neglected, including communities of color and Native Americans, by making education, childcare, healthcare, and housing more affordable. We can give tens of millions of families a leg up by making sure that we can get our children out of poverty, and I thank the Presiding Officer for his leadership on that issue. We can provide ladders to families who haven't had them before and help them climb into the middle class.

Many of the policies we are proposing were in President Biden's American Jobs and Family Plan, but some go beyond, like expanding Medicare to cover

dental, vision, and hearing benefits—something that was left out of Medicare at the beginning. It never should have been, and we can rectify it now.

By cutting taxes for tens of millions of American families, we can expand opportunity and make it easier for parents to pass on a better life to their children and their grandchildren. By making further investments in infrastructure, we can create tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands—of good-paying jobs. By finally tackling climate change, we can spare our country and our planet the most devastating effects of global warming.

Just this morning, a major new report from climate scientists at the United Nations concluded that the nations of the world have only a small window to “prevent the most harrowing future”—“prevent the most harrowing future”—in the words of the New York Times.

Without immediate and bold action, we are staring down ever worsening floods and heat waves, droughts and sea level rise. The future of our planet looks bleak until we do something right now. The budget reconciliation bill will do more to combat climate change than any legislation ever—in the history of the Senate. That is a promise.

While my Republican colleagues regurgitate the same tired talking points about a Democratic spending spree, let me remind America that we plan to pay for this package by making the wealthy pay their fair share.

When our Republican friends held the majority in this Chamber, they chose to use the same process Democrats are using now—budget reconciliation—to give corporations and the wealthy a massive tax break. At a time of egregious income inequality, the former Republican majority rammed through a bill where 83 percent of the benefits went to the top 1 percent—83 percent of the benefits.

I have nothing against the wealthy. God bless them—they are doing fine already—but it is time to cut taxes for American families, middle-class families, not multinational corporations. To make our Tax Code more progressive and more fair, that is what Democrats are going to do. Under this plan, there will be no tax increases on small business or American families making under \$400,000.

We are going to help small businesses create many, many, many jobs.

We are going to give American families a fair shot. We are going to tell middle-class families we are going to make it easier for you to stay there with your increasing costs of things like childcare and school and college and so much else. We are going to tell poorer families we are going to make it easier for you to climb into the middle class with things like the child tax credit and better healthcare and so much more.

We are going to confront the generational challenge of climate change

head on. We are not flinching; we are not wincing; we are going right at it. As bad as COVID was this year, and it was horrible, 5 or 10 years from now—every year—climate change will make things worse and worse and worse, even worse than it was this year in COVID, because when climate changes, it is such an overwhelming force that, unless we do something now, we may not be able to stop it down the road.

So, taking a step back, at its core, the Democratic budget is about restoring the middle class in the 21st century and giving more Americans the opportunity to get there. Unfortunately, the past 20 years in America have been a story of middle-class decline.

We have all watched as globalization and technology transformed the way our economy works. Industrial manufacturing jobs were shipped overseas. A global financial crisis cost Americans their homes and their wealth. Giant conglomerates wiped out Main Street businesses from Arizona to Arkansas, from Michigan to Maine. The cost of raising a family—everything from childcare to college tuition—has become exorbitant, almost unaffordable, even for those solidly in the middle class.

Now, after the worst pandemic in a hundred years, American families are just starting to climb out of the rubble and look toward the future. We want them to look toward that future with hope and with optimism, not with the sourness and anger that we have seen throughout the land—exacerbated, played upon by the previous President.

What the future looks like, in large part, depends on what we do here now. These next few months are crucial for the future of our country, even for our democracy.

What we need to do in Congress is to give our workers, our businesses, our families a chance to prosper in a rapidly changing world, a chance to have hope, a chance to restore that American dream, which simply says, if I work hard, I will be doing better 10 years from now than I am doing today, and my kids will be doing still better than me. When Americans lose that faith, lose that hope, that sunny American optimism that has been part of our character for centuries, bad things happen. Bad things happen to our democracy, to our relationships with one another, to just about everything.

The social contract in America relies on the fundamental promise of economic opportunity, the chance, through hard work, to do better for yourself and then give your children and grandchildren a better life than you have. That is what America is all about. That is what we are trying to restore and revivify here.

When that promise is broken, when that American dream is no longer shining brightly in the sky, when faith in economic opportunity evaporates, we are not the America we were meant to be. We are not optimistic and entrepreneurial and forward-looking. Instead,

we are bitter and angry and backward-looking and, as a result, much more prone to the sway of demagogues like Donald Trump. The divisions in our country and our politics today have their roots in the decline of economic mobility.

Now, the American people don't expect one piece of legislation to solve all our Nation's ills—no single law can do that—but we have to start in a bold, strong way rebuilding the basic social contract for middle-class American families and for everyone struggling to get there: a promise of equal opportunity and equality; helping middle-class Americans stay in the middle class; building ladders to help others climb into that middle class. At its core, that is what this budget is all about, and we are going to take the first steps toward passing it very, very soon.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last election cycle, Americans elected a 50-50 Senate, a closely divided House, and a President who promised unity and moderation.

What have Washington Democrats done in response?

They have set out trying to tax and spend our country into oblivion. They have handed the keys to domestic policymaking to Chairman SANDERS and some socialist House Members.

In the spring, they passed a massive, inflationary, liberal spending bill that Democrats bragged was the most liberal bill in American history.

Now, this week, just a few months later, they want to start ramming through trillions more that will make that disaster look like child's play.

They call it \$3½ trillion in spending. Nonpartisan experts say those plans would more likely cost Americans about \$5½ trillion—trillions more borrowing and trillions more spending, when inflation is already sticking American families with higher costs; new permanent welfare, with no work requirements, when small businesses are already struggling to find workers; sweeping amnesty, when the southern border is already in crisis; Green New Deal regulations, when Americans' gas prices have already shot up; and crushing tax hikes for family businesses and farms, as they fight to recover from the recession.

So, apparently, tragedy and comedy really are two sides of the same coin.

The tragedy is that Democrats want to inflict all this pain on middle-class families. Here is the comedy: They won't let Republicans have any say in this monstrosity, but they want our help raising their credit card to make it happen.

Democrats want Republicans to help them raise the debt limit so they can keep spending historic sums of money with zero Republican input and zero Republican votes.

So imagine a friend tells you he is flying off to Las Vegas to blow all of his money. He doesn't care that you think it is irresponsible. You aren't invited to come along, but he wants you to cosign a loan for him before he leaves.

Now, I understand the administration sent out the Treasury Secretary to argue that, historically, both parties have addressed the debt ceiling together. Of course, it is our Senate Democrat colleagues who have no interest in what is historically normal. Their borrowing and spending are historically abnormal. Democrats keep boasting about how wild and revolutionary their partisan vision is.

So our friends across the aisle should not expect traditional bipartisan borrowing to finance their nontraditional reckless taxing-and-spending spree. That is not how it is going to work.

Democrats have all the existing tools they need to raise the debt limit on a partisan basis. If they want 50 lockstep Democratic votes to spend trillions and trillions more, they can find 50 Democratic votes to finance it. If they don't want Republicans' input, they don't need our help. It couldn't really be simpler, and it really couldn't be more fair.

Besides, I thought my colleagues were literally thrilled to present another reckless taxing-and-spending spree to the American people. I thought middle-class families were supposed to be delighted with their socialist shopping list.

So shouldn't Democrats be proud to own all the debt it requires?

Our colleagues seem confident that Chairman SANDERS' vision is worth sticking our kids and grandkids with a massive bill. They deserve to have total ownership of that decision.

AFGHANISTAN

Now, Mr. President, on a totally different matter, when the Biden administration announced its reckless retreat from Afghanistan in April, I made my opposition perfectly clear.

But I wasn't alone. One of the most prominent liberal editorial boards in the country responded to the President's move with this headline: "Biden takes the easy way out of Afghanistan. The likely result is disaster."

The administration's own top intelligence experts made a similar prediction:

The Taliban is likely to make gains on the battlefield, and the Afghan Government will struggle to hold the Taliban at bay if the coalition withdraws its support.

The Director of the CIA told Senators that withdrawal would make his Agency's job harder. And needless to say, the last time a Democratic administration tried a hasty retreat from the region offered a cautionary tale.

Reality was clear to everyone but the very top of the Biden administration. From their bizarre choice of a symbolic September 11 deadline, to the absence of any concrete plan, the administration's decision appears to have rested on wishful thinking and not much else.

The notion that Afghan Forces might be able to stop the Taliban's advance with only "over-the-horizon" support? That has proven to be wishful thinking.

That the Taliban might respond to the diplomatic plying of the international community? Wishful thinking as well.

As the administration's withdrawal proceeds at full speed, expert warnings have become deadly realities.

The Afghan people and their democratic institutions are literally being ripped apart by murderous theocrats. Nearly 1,000 Afghans have reportedly been killed already by Taliban death squads in the Province of Kandahar alone.

In the last 2 months, the militants have taken more territory—more territory in the last 2 months—than they have held since 2001. And in just the last 4 days, the Taliban have raised their flag over six—six—provincial capitals, including northern cities far, far from the group's historic base of power.

Militants are engaged in a campaign to assassinate crucial members of the remaining resistance, from military pilots to top government ministers.

All across the country, women and children are already suffering, in particular. One recent report claimed Taliban militants beat a child to death because his father—listen to this: Beat a child to death because his father served in the Afghan Armed Forces.

What is more, the prospect of an emboldened al-Qaida—capable of threatening not only the region, but the American homeland—is now a near certainty, no matter what the Biden administration tells itself about the state of that threat today.

And yet the State Department still mouths unbelievably naive platitudes, like "expectation" is that the Taliban will work toward "political settlement," even as the Taliban spokesman asserted that the most recent attacks are just "the beginning of retaliatory operations."

So does this sound like a group committed to peaceful means?

Goodness' sake, get a grip.

This willful denial isn't just costing Afghanistan; it is already costing the American people and our interests.

It has forced loyal coalition partners to second-guess whether we can be trusted to finish what we start. It has led brave Afghans, who earned promises of assistance, to fear they would be abandoned amid our incompetent—

completely incompetent—retreat. It has even left overwhelmed Embassy personnel to urge remaining Americans in Afghanistan to leave immediately by any means available.

This morning, I attended a classified briefing from administration officials about current conditions on the ground. Look, needless to say, the briefers faced some tough questions about an entirely avoidable—entirely avoidable—situation that is deteriorating faster every single day; and they will certainly face more as global terrorists feed from the rise of an extremist government in Afghanistan.

I, for one, have warned repeatedly that those who seek to harm us, our friends, and our interests simply do not abide by our political time tables. They do not care if our leaders get tired of the task at hand.

And this is not what victory looks like.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I attended the same classified briefing as the Republican Senate leader, and I listened carefully as the administration presented the realities of Afghanistan, and I was drawn to a historical analogy that was best captured in a short verse by Rudyard Kipling.

It goes like this: When you're wounded and down on the Afghan plain, and the women come out to cut up your remains, just roll on your rifle and blow out your brains and go to your God like a soldier.

That stark verse was a description of what happened to the British Empire when they felt that moving into Afghanistan would be part of their record of conquest. They learned otherwise.

The retreat from Kabul has been reported over and over, but it basically was a retreat that killed every remaining British soldier, every member of their family, save one. They wanted one person, the Afghans did, to return to Queen Victoria and tell her what happened when they threw the British out of Afghanistan. A similar story can be told by the Soviet Union—now Russia—when they occupied Afghanistan with visions of changing that country forever to a Russian communist mode. They left bitterly disappointed, paying a heavy price.

So 20 years ago, in the wake of 9/11, with 3,000 innocent Americans dead, we debated the issue on this floor as to whether the United States would follow the British and Russians into Afghanistan.

I was here. I was asked to vote, and I remember why I voted yes. It was simple. Those responsible for 9/11 and the deaths of 3,000 innocent Americans were holed up in Afghanistan building their forces to strike us again. Would we respond? The answer was obvious. Yes. No one gets away with that sort of an attack on the United States, and I voted for us to send our forces into Afghanistan. I dare say that neither I nor anyone else who voted for that decision

ever dreamed that 20 years later we would still be in Afghanistan having lost 2,000 American lives of the brave American women and men who served there; tens of thousands of people injured, trillions of American dollars spent, with virtually nothing to show for it. What we learned, the bitter lesson for America, as it was for the Great Britain and the Russians, is that Afghanistan has no appetite for outsiders.

We tried to bring them dramatic, positive improvements in their culture and education, the liberation of women, creating new opportunities, and maybe we had some marginal success. But it is a battle when you try to change a nation's ethic, and we learned it the hard way.

At the briefing today, one of our colleagues whom I respect very much, Senator KAINE from Virginia, I thought asked the most important question about the current situation in Afghanistan. He said it was his understanding that the United States had spent billions, maybe more, in the training and equipping of the Afghan military forces supporting the government and that we had in fact trained and equipped over 100,000, maybe as many as 300,000, of these Afghan security forces, and now they are losing territory and melting away into the landscape when they are under attack by the Taliban.

Senator KAINE said: I understand that there are only tens of thousands of Taliban and hundreds of thousands of Afghan security forces, and it appears we cannot hold our ground despite all the training and all the money. Was this a failure of training or more? And those representing the administration were very candid. It is not a failure of training. It is an issue that, frankly, cannot be accomplished.

So when I hear the Senator from Kentucky coming to the floor and begging us to stay, to what end? For what purpose? Senator KAINE, myself, and others invited him and the entire Senate to openly debate this question on the authorization for use of force in Afghanistan. There was resistance.

And the idea of actually, finally, leaving Afghanistan after 20 years, it wasn't an original Joe Biden idea. If you remember, it was Republican President Donald Trump, who actively engaged in the negotiation and picking a target date for our troops to be gone. He tried and wanted to achieve that before he left office. He didn't, but it was clearly his intent. So to blame the Biden administration for this decision, frankly, it is a decision that has been obvious for almost 10 years. There comes a point when we have to acknowledge that we cannot ask another American to die in a vain effort to change Afghanistan into a modern nation. It will only come when the Afghan people reach that conclusion.

SENATE AGENDA

Mr. President, you know well, and I do, too, that we are usually not in session in this week of August. It is usu-

ally a time to head back home, meet our constituents, eat our way through our State Fairs, and enjoy some downtime with our families. This year, I was looking forward to a visit by some of my grandkids to Springfield when Loretta and I have a week or two of just getting to know the kids again.

We didn't get to see them much last year because of COVID-19, and I was looking forward to the opportunity this year, but because we are in session I was unable to. We hope maybe in a few days that changes.

I think about those grandkids, all of my grandkids—six of them at this point, I am proud to say—and what kind of world we are going to be leaving them.

A new school year is right around the corner. Along with all the normal supplies, they will be buying face masks. For a young child, this pandemic must be confusing and scary. As a parent, you want to be honest with them, but you want to reassure them that everything is going to be OK. That goes for all the challenges of our day, starting with climate change.

This morning, the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its first report in 8 years. It is an alarm bell to the world, warning that our climate is changing much faster than we anticipated.

I would like to read a couple paragraphs from this morning's New York Times because they summarize these U.N. reports and did that summary so well.

"Nations have delayed curbing their fossil-fuel emissions for so long that they can no longer stop global warming from intensifying over the next 30 years, though there is still a short window to prevent the most harrowing future, a major new United Nations scientific report has concluded.

Humans have already heated the planet by . . . 2 degrees Fahrenheit, since the 19th century, largely by burning coal, oil, and gas for energy. And the consequences can be felt across the globe: This summer alone, blistering heat waves have killed hundreds of people in the United States and Canada, floods have devastated Germany and China, and wildfires have waged out of control in Siberia, Turkey, and Greece."

So what do we say to our kids about this? Dad, granddad, what are you doing about this?

How do we reassure our kids that the planet they inherit is still going to be livable. Words aren't enough. Denial certainly isn't a plan. We need to do something. And we need to do what generations of Americans before us have done: face reality and face the challenges squarely.

So I ask myself and all of us: What are we doing to make sure that my grandkids and all of America's kids will be OK?

We are going to have a chance to answer that question this week as the Senate begins to debate on a proposal

that will define the world my grandkids and everyone's kids will grow up in.

President Biden's plan to build back better is the most ambitious investment in America's future in a generation. And much of that plan is included in the budget blueprint that we will be considering in a very short time.

This budget blueprint will strengthen our Nation's economy and ensure that working families have a fighting chance and receive a fair share of the wealth that their work produces.

It will help close the income and opportunity gaps between the wealthiest among us and working families who are struggling to make it. And most importantly, it will give American workers the tools they need to outcompete any country in the 21st century.

I listened to the criticism of the plan by the Senator from Kentucky, and I thought: If we don't embark on an ambitious plan to deal with climate change and to move this economy in the right direction for working families in this country, then, frankly, we are right in preparing, as some are, to accept a second-place finish for the United States of America. I think that is tragic. I don't think it is consistent with who we are as a people.

The proposal by President Biden will build on a winning economic strategy we started earlier this year with the American Rescue Plan.

Mr. President, you remember that American Rescue Plan and I do, too, because last year, in the year 2020, when we were facing this pandemic on two, three, or four separate occasions, emergency bills came before us proposed by the Trump administration, negotiated with a Democratic and Republican Congress, presented to us on the floor, and there was virtual unanimity. Both parties stood together in the midst of a pandemic crisis to do what was necessary so that America could move forward. And then came the election and then came the Big Lie and then came the disintegration of this bipartisanship.

When it was Joe Biden's turn to come up with the American Rescue Plan, not a single Republican Senator, not one Republican Congressman, would vote yes. Not one.

So what was in the plan that was so objectionable? Could it have been the money invested so that we would administer the coronavirus vaccines to every American successfully? That was in the plan.

How about more money that we put in that plan for businesses so they could reenlist their workforce and start up again at the end of this pandemic? That was in the plan.

How about the money that we promised American families, \$1,400 cash payment, promised by Trump, delivered by Biden? That was in the plan. And not a single Republican would support it—not one. All of a sudden rescue plans became a partisan measure in the U.S. Senate and the House. The Republicans walked away from it.

Well, let me tell you what the American Rescue Plan has done. It has revived our Nation's economy. We are on the course for a historic recovery. In the first 6 months, President Biden's economy has added nearly 700,000 jobs a month, on average. During the first part of the year, our economy grew at the fastest rate in nearly 40 years. The American Rescue Plan, which not a single Republican would support, worked because it provided financial relief to the people who need it the most: working families. And that relief has benefited everyone.

As part of this package—and you know it full well, Senator, because you were one of the authors—we enacted a child tax credit that we believe, fingers crossed, will cut child poverty in America by half. Think about that for a moment. By half.

With the Build Back Better Plan, President Biden is proposing to extend that credit and reduction in child poverty. That enhanced child tax credit is already changing the lives of tens of millions of families across America. In my home State of Illinois, there are hundreds of thousands of parents who are now able to fill their gas tanks and buy groceries because of it.

Let me tell you about one: Lydia. Here is what she wrote: "With the child tax credit, I'll be able to buy my kids their school supplies, clothes, what they need to get back to school, and put groceries on the table."

In the wealthiest Nation on Earth, no parent should have to choose between clothing her children and feeding them.

President Biden's plan to build back better is a blueprint for America's future, a future where every family knows the safety and dignity of financial security, and every child can reach their full potential.

I look forward to a vigorous debate in the Senate on these and other proposals in the budget blueprint. But right now I want to speak specifically to the funding the budget resolution provides for the committee I chair, the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I see the chairman of the Budget Committee has come to the floor, Senator SANDERS, and I thank you for crafting this important bill.

(Ms. WARREN assumed the Chair.)

This proposal will make historic investments in fixing our broken immigration system. It has been 35 years—35 years—since we have had any meaningful changes in our immigration law. If you go back to Ronald Reagan as President, that was the last time—Simpson-Mazzoli—names those of us who study the subject remember. Most people don't, I am afraid. Yet that was the last time.

Is there anyone who can say with a straight face that we don't have a broken immigration system in this country? We do.

The proposal will give us historic investments in fixing it. These reforms have the potential to generate more than a trillion dollars of economic

growth over the next decade. I listened as the Senator from Kentucky, the Republican leader, dismissed this whole conversation as "blanket amnesty"—blanket amnesty—and correlated all immigration problems to the current challenge, and it is a challenge, that we face on our southern border.

The reforms that we have in mind will provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers. Excuse me if I take this one personally, but it was 20 years ago that I introduced the DREAM Act in the U.S. Senate. As I said jokingly, at the time, if you asked people, "Who are the Dreamers?" they would say a British rock group—right?—led by a fellow named Freddie.

Well, maybe they were right then, but 20 years later, when you say "Dreamers"—and people say it frequently—you know who we are talking about. They are kids brought to the United States by their parents, who grew up in this country, pledged allegiance to that flag every day in their school classrooms, and believed in their heart of hearts that they were Americans to the core, only to learn when the parents worked up the courage to tell them when they were teenagers that they were undocumented. They were kids without a country.

The DREAM Act said: We are going to give you a chance, young man, young woman. You can earn your way to legal status and citizenship. Keep your nose clean. Don't get in trouble with the law. Pay the necessary fees and wait, and we will give you that chance to become part of America's future.

And even with that uncertainty in their lives, with the inability to qualify for even Federal Government loans to go to college, they have written some dramatic stories. We all know them. Those of us in public life have met them. They are doctors and nurses and dentists. They are on the frontlines of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. They want to enlist, and some already have enlisted, in our military. They are lawyers. They are entrepreneurs. They are amazing, and they did it all never certain that they were going to be accepted in America.

According to Senator MCCONNELL, they are part of this blanket amnesty of these immigrants who want to come to our country. Forgive me, Senator, but they are much more than that.

This measure would also take care of temporary protected status people—people in the United States who came here because of a crisis in their own countries. We accepted them. They have lived here for 20 years and, now, frankly, they are caught in the middle. We give them a chance to earn their way to citizenship.

And farm workers—do you know we have 2.4 million farm workers? These are men and women who get out and do the dirty, dangerous, hot work that Americans will never queue up to do. And they do it because we want fruits and vegetables on our table. We want

meat and poultry processed safely, and Americans won't do the work. Let's just be very candid about it. And I know this based on all the people who come to my office. These farm workers have been used by our country for years to pick our crops and deliver them safely to our tables, and we have a bill that we put together, with the growers and the workers in total agreement, that gives these farm workers a path to citizenship.

When we had a hearing on it in the Senate Judiciary Committee, one of the Republican Senators said: Oh, just what we need—*instant amnesty* for farm workers.

Do you know what that *instant amnesty* is like? You have to show that you have spent 10 years of your life working in the fields before you even qualify for the 9-year process that can bring you to citizenship. Nineteen years—*instant amnesty*? No, it isn't.

And, again, other essential immigrant workers who have been saving our lives and keeping our families fed during this pandemic. They are called essential workers, but the categories that created these essential workers were defined by Donald Trump—not us, not Democrats. And we believe essential workers—whom we thanked profusely during this pandemic—if they are undocumented, should have a chance at citizenship. Those are the groups we are trying to work to bring into a full-time status.

This measure would expand funding for commonsense measures to make our system safer for everyone by improving the process of asylum claims, reducing immigration court backlogs, and starting to secure our southern border.

More than 200,000 DACA recipients are essential critical infrastructure workers. Tens of thousands of these young people have been saving our loved one's lives as nurses, doctors, and medical professionals. Hundreds of thousands of undocumented farm workers will account for about half of our Nation's farm workforce and do back-breaking labor every day to put food on our tables. These members of our communities have more than earned their path to citizenship.

I am going to get into the weeds a bit here, but I want to say, under a Senate rule known as the Byrd Rule, any provision included in reconciliation must have a substantial and direct impact on the budget, and this impact cannot be merely incidental. That is kind of the roadmap for this budget resolution. I am sure the Senator from Vermont knows it well.

Let's be clear. A pathway to citizenship as part of our immigration package on the budget reconciliation bill would have a substantial and direct impact on our budget. A pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and immigrants with temporary protected status would have a budgetary cost of approximately \$42.4 billion over 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. This

is a critical component of our economic recovery. There is no world in which this budgetary impact is merely incidental—\$42.4 billion.

Creating a pathway to citizenship, though, is not just a matter of cost. There are also benefits. It would boost our Nation's GDP by \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. It would create 400,000 new jobs and increase every American's annual wage by an estimated \$600—win, win, and win.

There is ample precedent for passing this important legislation through budget reconciliation. The Republicans have used this process to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska for drilling and enacted a \$1.9 trillion tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and corporations.

In addition, in 2005, Senate Republicans used reconciliation to dramatically increase the number of lawful permanent residents by an estimated 3.2 million over 10 years. Now they are saying it doesn't belong in reconciliation. In 2005, they put it in. This is the exact same immigration status we are proposing to give Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and essential workers.

I have tried for many years to pass a path to citizenship. Republicans have obstructed bipartisan immigration reform time and time again, including filibustering the DREAM Act at least five times. This year, I convened bipartisan immigration negotiations that dragged on for months. Republicans made unreasonable demands and insisted on attaching partisan provisions that would actually cut legal immigration. Republicans have rejected commonsense measures to help secure our border.

It is clear that the only viable option for passing immigration reform is through the reconciliation process. For those who claim they are concerned about our southern border, here is your chance. Here it is—to invest billions of dollars in smart and effective steps to improve border security. We need to provide a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers and others who are contributing to our economy every day and will help to grow it for years to come.

I am going to close by thanking the Senator from Vermont. I don't know when I first approached him with this notion of including immigration, but from day one, Senator SANDERS has been supportive of the concept and now has given us our chance. Millions, millions of people who make America better are watching and hoping that in the next days and weeks we can achieve our goal and give them a chance to find a path to citizenship and become an important part of America's future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, let me thank Senator DURBIN for his leadership in so many areas, including the understanding, as he just indicated, that the time is long overdue for com-

prehensive immigration reform and a path toward citizenship for millions of undocumented workers and families in this country. Thank you very much, Senator DURBIN.

As a former mayor, I do understand how important physical infrastructure is—roads, bridges, water systems, wastewater plants—and I am delighted that finally we are beginning to address our long neglected physical infrastructure. Frankly, it is rather incredible that, year after year, we ignore crumbling bridges and roads. And as we address our physical infrastructure, we can create a whole lot of good-paying jobs.

So that bill that we are discussing right now is enormously important. I will tell you what is even more important, and that is to address the long neglected needs of the working families of our country, of the children, of the elderly, of the sick, of the poor, whether they are Black or White or Latino, Native American, Asian American. These are needs that Congress has ignored for much, much too long.

Now, I understand that Senator MCCONNELL, the Republican leader, and others are really shocked by this bill. They cannot believe it. Imagine—just imagine—that the U.S. Senate is addressing the needs of working families and is going to stand up for ordinary Americans rather than just the wealthy and powerful? What is this world coming to? Don't we understand that here in the Senate we are supposed to take campaign contributions from the drug companies and the insurance companies and the fossil fuel industry and from the 1 percent and do their bidding? Isn't that the way it has always been done here in the U.S. Senate?

Well, Senator MCCONNELL, things are changing. For once in a very long time, the U.S. Congress is going to stand with working families and not just the rich and the powerful.

Further, above and beyond the economic crisis facing working families, Congress has ignored the great existential threat of our time, and that is climate change. You don't have to believe me. Maybe some of my Republican colleagues might want to take a look at the IPCC report, which came out today, which said that if we do not act boldly and immediately all over this planet, the world that we will be leaving our children and grandchildren will be increasingly unhealthy and uninhabitable.

But you don't have to just read the IPCC report. Open up your eyes. Look at what is going on in California, the fires in Oregon, the fires in Greece, and the drought that is impacting countries all over the world, which will mean a decrease in food production and water supply.

We have to act now in order to save the planet. There is no choice. We cannot go home and look our children and grandchildren in the eye if we do not act now and lead the world. We can't

do it alone. We are going to have to work with China and India and Europe, but we cannot continue to ignore this existential threat.

The gap between the very, very rich and everybody else is wider today than it has been in 100 years. People on top are doing phenomenally well. In fact, we have two people in America today who own more wealth than the bottom 40 percent. The top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 92 percent, and since 2009—the Wall Street collapse—45 percent of all new income has gone to the top 1 percent.

And, incredibly, during the pandemic that we are experiencing now, billionaires in America have seen their wealth increase by \$1.8 trillion during this pandemic, while at the same time, thousands of essential workers died providing the goods and services we needed.

Billionaires become richer. Ordinary people have to go to work—public transit, grocery stores, hospitals—and thousands die. While some of our multi-multibillionaires are spending some of their enormous amounts of money flying off into outer space, today and in the coming days we are going to address the crises facing working families right here on the ground, on planet Earth.

And that is why, as chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, I am proud to introduce a \$3.5 trillion budget resolution that we will soon be considering—I expect tomorrow.

This is a budget resolution that will allow the Senate to move forward on a reconciliation bill that, in my view, will be the most consequential and comprehensive piece of legislation for working people, for the elderly, for the children, for the sick, and for the poor, that this body has addressed since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the New Deal, in the 1930s.

This is a budget resolution that will address the needs of working families because we understand, if our Republican colleagues do not, that there is something fundamentally wrong when real inflation accounted-for wages for working people has not gone up for almost 50 years.

We have seen in recent years, as everybody knows, an explosion in technology, an explosion in worker productivity. And yet, in real inflation accounted-for dollars, where the very, very rich become much richer, real inflation accounted-for wages for workers has not gone up in almost 50 years.

What does that mean?

It means the cost of healthcare has soared. The cost of education has soared. The cost of housing has soared. And yet real workers, real working families of this country are earning in real dollars the same wages that they did decades ago, which means that many of them are struggling right now to keep their heads above water economically.

In the richest country in the history of the world, half of our people should

not be living paycheck to paycheck, worried about how they are going to pay their rent or provide food for their kids.

This legislation, in so many ways, begins to address the working families of our country. But one important way—maybe the most important—is, as we address the needs of our people in healthcare, in education, in climate, we are going to create many millions of good-paying—good-paying—jobs that the American people desperately need.

I want to say a few words today about the budget resolution that we are introducing and what is going to be in the reconciliation package that we will soon be undertaking.

For a start, one of the questions that everybody is going to ask is: Well, how is this going to be paid for? Expensive bill, \$3½ trillion. You know, that is a lot of money.

It is.

Well, I happen to think, and I know that you do as well—I say to the Presiding Officer that maybe, just maybe, the time is now for the wealthiest people in this country and the largest corporations who are doing phenomenally well, but in a given year, many of them have not paid a nickel in Federal income tax—ah, the average Joe, the average Mary out there, they are working. They are paying their fair share of taxes. But if you are an Amazon, if you are a Jeff Bezos, if you are one of these multibillionaires, you have lobbyists, you have accountants, you have lawyers, and you can avoid paying your fair share of taxes.

So what some of us are saying is that maybe, just maybe, even if you are a billionaire, even if you are a large, profitable corporation with all kinds of lobbyists and accountants, maybe you should start paying your fair share of taxes.

My Republican friends say we are going to be raising taxes. Well, you are right, we are. But we are going to be raising taxes on the wealthiest people in this country—something which is long overdue—and yet nobody in America earning less than \$400,000 a year will pay a nickel in taxes, and many, many, will actually be paying less in taxes.

So my Republican friends can complain all that they want, but I do believe, and the American people do believe, that the time is now for the wealthy, the powerful, the large, profitable corporations to start paying their fair share so that, in fact, we can lower taxes for working families in this country.

I think the American people have already begun to see what good public policy for working families can mean. In Vermont, in Massachusetts, and all over this country, working families—the vast majority of our families—are now receiving a \$300-per-month check per child, and this is long, long overdue.

Some say this is a radical idea. It is not. It is exactly what countries all

over the world do because they understand, and we understand, how difficult it is today for working families to raise children.

And I am enormously proud of the fact—and everybody in this Chamber should be proud of the fact—that at a time when the United States has one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of any major country on Earth, as a result of the work in the American Rescue Plan, which must be extended in the reconciliation bill, we have reduced childhood poverty in America by 61 percent—61 percent—because we are now getting the resources out to moms and dads that they need in order to adequately and decently raise their kids.

You know, I hear a lot of talk about how we love our kids or the future of our country. Well, if we love our kids, we have to love their parents as well, and we have to make it easier for parents to raise their kids.

But it is not just the child tax credit. I suspect that there are very few people in this country who do not understand how dysfunctional our childcare system is. We are not living in the 1950s, where dad goes out to work and mom stays home with the kids. That is not the case anymore. It has not been the case for a very long time. Dad is out working and mom is out working because families all across this country need two breadwinners in order to pay the bills.

While mom is working and dad is working, who is taking care of the kids?

And that is, in fact, a major, major crisis in this country, and the current system just is not working.

In my State, the State of Vermont, it costs \$15,000 a year, which is about the national average, to send your child into childcare.

What does that mean?

It means that if you are making \$60,000 a year, you are spending a quarter of your income just to make sure that your child is well taken care of while you go to work. If you have two kids, forget about it. It doesn't pay to go to work because you are spending so much on childcare. Everybody understands that. That is not a debate.

So the time is long overdue not only to protect the needs of working families, but also to provide well for our children.

Psychologists after psychologists have told us that the most important years of human development are 0 through 4. And yet so many of our kids all over this country—little kids—are sitting in front of TV sets, not getting the kind of nurturing, emotionally and intellectually, that they need. This legislation begins to change that.

Under our proposal, no working family in this country should be paying more than 7 percent of their income for childcare.

Working parents, do you hear what I just said? No more than 7 percent—not 30 percent, not 25 percent.

That is what we should be doing.

And we have so much work to do in childcare. I know the Presiding Officer understands that. We got to build new facilities for kids because once we open the door for affordable childcare, the truth is we don't have enough space to accommodate the children.

And we have got to start paying childcare workers the wages they are due for the enormously important work they are providing. We got childcare workers in America today making less than McDonald's workers. What an insult. How wrong is that?

So this legislation is going to provide increased subsidies for working families to afford childcare. We are going to pay workers in childcare living wages and benefits, and we are going to build the new facilities that we need to accommodate the families who will now have the opportunity to take advantage of childcare.

But in terms of our children, who we have ignored for so, so long, we are going to do even more than that. We are going to make pre-K education for 3- and 4-year-olds free. God didn't create an education system that begins in kindergarten. It is created by human beings, and the world has changed. And what we have got to understand now, with so many of our parents working, that we have got to make pre-K education for 3- and 4-year-olds free, and that is what we do in this legislation.

And, by the way, not widely reported, but when we revolutionize childcare and pre-K so that moms and dads know that their kids are in quality and affordable facilities, we are going to see more than a million women able to go into the workforce because they no longer have to stay home to take care of the kids. If they want to work, we will give them the opportunity to pursue their careers.

The Presiding Officer knows, and I know, that there is something a little bit absurd that the United States of America is literally one of two nations in the entire world—and I am talking about poor nations—that does not guarantee paid family and medical leave.

What does that mean?

What it means: That there are workers today who are at work when they are sick. Maybe they are spreading the virus or some other illness. There are working families who have to make a choice: Does mom go to work and leave her sick child at home alone, or does she stay home and maybe lose her job?

I have talked—and I am sure the Presiding Officer has spoken—to women who gave birth to a baby and a week later—a week later—was forced to go back to work because they had no income coming in.

I know this may shock some of my Republican colleagues, but there are countries all over this world that understand that it is enormously important that parents be able to bond with their babies. And in countries around the world, women get 4 months, 5

months, 8 months off with full pay or with a significant part of their paycheck in order to stay home with their newborn babies.

So, finally, finally, we are beginning—beginning; more to do; beginning—to end the international embarrassment of the United States being the only major country on Earth not to guarantee paid family and medical leave.

I know the Presiding Officer has been involved in this issue—I have and a number of my colleagues have—in the understanding that in the contemporary global economy, if our young people are going to go out and get decent-paying jobs, a shock of all shocks, they actually need to have the skills and the education in order to perform those jobs.

So you have a situation now where there are jobs all over this country that are lying vacant, not being taken, because people don't have the skills.

Now, I personally believe we should do what other countries are doing and we should make all public colleges and universities tuition-free and should forgive all student debt. That is not in this bill.

But what is in this bill is a beginning—a beginning—and that says that we will make community colleges in this country tuition-free.

Now, what does that mean?

It means a couple of things. It means that if I go to community college, I can learn a skill—whether it is nursing, whether it is construction trades, whatever it may be. I can learn the skills that I need to go out and get a job that pays me a living wage.

And that is enormously important because—especially as we rebuild this country—as we begin to pay attention to healthcare and to childcare and to taking care of our parents and the disabled people, we need skilled workers, and making community colleges tuition-free for 2 years is an important step forward in allowing people to gain those skills.

But, also, for those people who want to go to a 4-year college, those 2 years of community college credits are transferrable. So your tuition is paid for the first 2 years. My hope is that we will soon be able to pay for the next 2 years as well, but this is a real start in allowing millions of young people to get an education today that previously they could not afford.

Two blocks away from where we are in the Nation's capital there is an encampment of homeless people. All over this city, you can't drive down the Nation's capital and not see people sleeping out on the street, and that is true in virtually every major city in America. Once again, the richest country in the history of the world, and some 600,000 Americans are homeless.

Then, on top of that, you have got about 18 million households where people are spending 50 percent or more of their limited incomes to put a roof over their heads.

Now, how do you survive economically if you are spending 50 percent of your income on housing?

This legislation will create a huge number of good-paying jobs by the largest investment in American history in low-income and affordable housing. And I see the chairman of the Banking Committee here, and I want to thank Senator BROWN for his important work in that area.

Just a few days ago, I had a chat with a gentleman whose wife is seriously ill. He works and he pays for the home healthcare that she needs, and it is an expensive proposition.

What we understand is that, in an aging society and at a time when we have so many people with disabilities whose needs are not being met, it makes eminent sense to bring skilled home-healthcare workers into the home rather than to force people to go into a nursing home, which, by the way, is more expensive. And this legislation, the reconciliation bill that we will soon be working on, will make historic investments in home healthcare and make sure that those workers—like childcare workers, who do such important work—are adequately compensated.

IPCC today reported what all of us know, and that is, if we do not begin in an extremely aggressive way transforming our energy system away from fossil fuel, the planet that we will be leaving our children will be increasingly unhealthy.

It really does take your breath away to look at those photos—whether it is Oregon, whether it is California, whether it is Greece right now—and see flames consuming entire communities.

And if anybody out there thinks that, gee, isn't this too bad that it is happening this year, you have got it wrong. It is only going to get worse if we do not act and act boldly, which is why this legislation will pour hundreds of billions of dollars into the fight to transform our energy system away from fossil fuel, including a civilian Climate Corps, which will give the young people of this country the opportunity to roll up their sleeves, get decent pay, and get educational benefits in order to do what is so much in their hearts, and that is to combat climate change.

I wish that I could tell you that my Republican colleagues understand the crises facing working families and that they understand the moral imperative of us having to address climate change and that we are working together to do, in fact, what the American people want: create millions of good-paying jobs, addressing the needs of working families and climate change.

I wish I could tell you that, but I can't. As we go forward, in all likelihood, we will not get one Republican vote. We are going to have to do it on our own with 50 Democratic votes here in the Senate, plus the Vice President of the United States.

Now, some of my Republican friends will say: Well, that is such a bad idea.

Why aren't you more bipartisan in terms of reconciliation?

Well, I would remind my Republican colleagues that they didn't have a problem with reconciliation when they gave almost \$2 trillion in tax breaks to the very richest people in this country and the largest corporations. No problem doing that. They didn't have a problem with reconciliation when they tried to throw 30 million people off of the healthcare they had by abolishing the Affordable Care Act.

So that is where we are. We are facing a crisis facing working families. We need to create millions of good-paying jobs. We need to tackle the existential threat of climate change. We need to expand healthcare and Medicare so that elderly people have dental care, eyeglasses, and hearing aids. We need to lower the cost of prescription drugs and have Medicare negotiate prices with the pharmaceutical industry. We need to make sure that we get doctors and nurses and dentists into underserved areas.

So, Madam President, tomorrow begins one of the very important debates that we have ever had. And the question is not complicated. Do we have the courage to stand up to powerful special interests and tell the corporate world and the 1 percent: Yeah, you are finally going to have to pay your fair share of taxes so that we can create millions of good-paying jobs for working families, so we can protect our children, protect the elderly, and address the threat of climate change?

That is the issue. And I have absolute confidence that we will, in fact, rise to the occasion and do what the American people want and that we will pass the budget resolution tomorrow.

With that, Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I first thank Senator SANDERS for his passionate support for housing. He understands, having traveled the country and connected with so many people, that there is almost nothing more important—maybe nothing more important to people's lives, to their material lives, than having a safe, accessible, affordable place to live.

And Senator SANDERS mentioned that 25 percent of renters in this country pay half their income in rent, for housing costs. And one thing goes bad in their lives—their car breaks down, their child gets sick, they miss a few days of work because of a minor injury—and their whole lives can turn upside down. Senator SANDERS recognizes that.

And the legislation we begin later in the week is such an important step, as the Presiding Officer knows as a member of the Banking and Housing Committee, that we are going to take on housing. So I thank Senator SANDERS for that.

H.R. 3684

Madam President, I rise today with a longer speech than I normally give, but

in support of the legislation that will make the generational investment in infrastructure for Ohio communities, for our Nation—the infrastructure investment we should have been making for years.

We remember, 4 years ago, all of us on this floor—all three members on this floor: the Presiding Officer and Senator SANDERS and I—were all ready to go with President Trump to move forward on infrastructure, and the President and the majority changed its mind. Instead of investing in jobs, investing in infrastructure, investing in people, they used that trillion-dollar-plus in a huge tax cut, 70 percent of which went to the wealthiest 1 percent.

So this time we didn't let that happen. I thank the 22 Members—11 Republicans and 11 Democrats—that held together and negotiated this very complicated bill. This investment is about jobs—creating good-paying union jobs; rebuilding bridges; replacing lead pipes; manufacturing next-generation, energy-efficient buses.

It is about better connecting people with jobs through transit and bridges and highways.

It is about getting people in rural Kansas or western Mass. or southeast Ohio or inner-city Cleveland the broadband they need to go to school and prepare for the jobs of the future.

Supporting manufacturing jobs throughout my State, which this bill does, including at Cleveland-Cliffs in Cleveland and AK Steel in southwest Ohio and Nucor in central Ohio and other suppliers through the strongest ever—the strongest ever, by America's standards—negotiated, working with Senator PORTMAN, legislation that we worked on with Senator BALDWIN, making steel and iron and other components in Ohio for all these projects.

Taken together, these investments are a recipe for job creation in communities large and small, rural and urban, in Ohio, from Appalachia to the shores of Lake Erie.

For too long, Washington has ignored these places while Wall Street has preyed upon them. That ends now. We invest in people and places that make this country work.

I hear from mayors of both parties in towns all over Ohio about their vision for their community and the projects they want to undertake. They know the opportunities we can unleash. They need the investment. It is time for all of our communities to share in this country's prosperity. That is what this legislation does.

I want to focus on a few key provisions that will be central and critical to Ohio. Right now, there are more than 3,200 bridges across Ohio that need repairs to make them safer and to reduce congestion so people can get to work, kids can get to school, farmers and businesses can move their products and support Ohio jobs.

I remember, as a kid, I worked on a family farm just outside Lexington, OH, in sort of north-central Ohio, and

we used a tractor, and I used to drive grain to the market, or we would take hay wagons to the barn. We would cross some of these small, little culvert bridges or bridges across creeks. Some of us called them cricks. And I know how some of those bridges, even then, looked to be in some disrepair and how important it is that we keep them up for farmers and for small business all over my State.

Many know the Brent Spence Bridge—talked about in all kinds of national infrastructure stories—between Ohio and Kentucky. Unbelievably enough, it carries 3 percent of the country's GDP either north to Ohio or south to Kentucky across the river—3 percent of the country's GDP—every day. But it is dangerously outdated.

It was completed, I believe, in 1960. Many of us fought for years for Federal investment.

Many of us have fought for years for Federal investment. One of the first news events, community events, I did when I came to the Senate in 2007 was go to the Brent Spence Bridge and express my commitment that we needed to do something. It was not quite—it wasn't in the shape then that it is now, but it clearly needed support and needed help.

Three and a half years ago, I introduced the Bridge Investment Act, to put Ohioans to work, repairing and upgrading Ohio bridges, with American iron and steel. This week, we are on the verge of getting it done. It will provide a grant to pay for half of the cost of replacing Brent Spence, and the additional funding in the package will support the remainder of the project.

We expect Ohio to get at least \$9.8 billion for Federal-aid highway assistance, including \$480 million of formula funds for bridge replacement to supplement the Bridge Investment Act.

It is not just Brent Spence that needs help; it is the Western Hills Viaduct in Hamilton County; it is I-70 over the Scioto River in Columbus in Franklin County; it is U.S. 30 in Richland County in North Central Ohio; it is the Broad Street Bridge in Columbus; it is major projects and smaller bridges on rural farmlands that let farmers get goods to market.

I talked this week with 81-year-old Howard Krueger. He lives in Wyoming, OH, outside of Cincinnati. He is retired from Procter & Gamble. A few years ago, as he was driving, a piece of the Western Hills Viaduct fell on his windshield. He stopped his car and got out and picked up the rock—about as big as his fist, a little bigger than his fist—took it with him and talked about it on a radio news conference we did.

It is a pretty visceral example of what we all know: Our Nation's infrastructure is literally crumbling. We need this investment. Think about the economic potential waiting to be unleashed when we fix these crumbling bridges—the kinds of bottlenecks that frustrate commuters and farmers and businesses in Ohio every day.

I want to thank our bipartisan co-sponsors of the Bridge Investment Act: Senators WYDEN, the chair of the Senate Finance Committee; Senator WHITEHOUSE; Senator INHOFE from Oklahoma; Senator WHITEHOUSE from Rhode Island—early partners in this effort. I want to thank Chairman CARPER and Ranking Member CAPITO, just across the river from Southeast Ohio, from West Virginia; the EPW Committee for their continued support.

The Banking and Housing Committee also provided a major part of this infrastructure package that includes record record—record—investment in public transportation. The Presiding Officer sits on this as a prominent member of this committee. She knows, as I know, that through her career and through my career—for almost a decade and a half, as long as I remember—this committee is just referred to by the media and by Senators as the “Banking Committee.” It was all about Wall Street. It was little about community banks. It was almost nothing about housing.

That has changed. This committee now we all refer to as the “Banking and Housing Committee.” Some refer to it as the “Housing and Banking Committee.”

In this committee, we take our job with public transit seriously. This package contains historic funding: \$90 billion over the next 5 years, \$40 billion increase for public transit—the largest ever. It will connect people with better jobs. It will promote equity. It will help our planet.

The Banking and Housing Committee held extensive hearings this spring on infrastructure and transit. We heard from Ohioans like Darryl Haley, who heads SORTA, Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority. We heard from Mayor Horrigan of Akron. We heard over and over and over again what we need to revitalize these essential systems, whether in Cleveland, where I live, or Youngstown or Toledo or anywhere in our State. We provide \$1½ billion so that cities like Cleveland and Ranking Member TOOMEY’s biggest city in his State, Philadelphia, can replace rail cars that, unbelievably, date back to the Reagan administration or earlier.

This bill ensures that public transportation receives more than 20 percent of the new investment from the highway trust fund. Senator SHELBY, once chair of this committee—retiring after, I believe, 36, 37 years on this committee—talked to me about that 80–20 split that has been here as long as he has been here, a tradition that both parties have respected.

This bill takes a huge step toward electrifying the transit bus fleet, providing over \$5 billion for the low emission and no emission program. It will mean modernizing the bus fleets in every city in America.

These funds will also retrain workers who maintain our current diesel fleet. Every electric bus purchase will keep and create good-paying jobs.

This bill will support investments in flood mitigation, an important issue that members of the Banking and Housing Committee, especially Senator MENENDEZ but a number of Senators in both parties who represent coastal States from Massachusetts, the Presiding Officer’s State, all the way to Louisiana, Senator KENNEDY’s State.

I want to thank the members of the Banking and Housing Committee, including Ranking Member TOOMEY, who worked to reauthorize Federal transit programs.

I particularly want to thank our Housing and Transit Subcommittee Chair TINA SMITH, from Minnesota, and the subcommittee’s ranking member, Senator ROUNDS, from South Dakota. I have worked with both of them. I have been to their subcommittee. Their efforts have been especially important to improve rural transit, including in Indian Country.

We are going to keep working to help rural transit agencies even more. We had hearings under the leadership of Chairman CRAPO 3 or 4 years ago where I heard stories from Senators in smaller States—mostly Republicans—talking about the importance of rural transit, where someone who lives out in the country, a bus—a paratransit bus—picks her up, takes her to her dialysis treatment, and then takes her back. That is kind of different from city-urban, big city bus transit but equally important to families.

I thank our Democratic Members for their strong focus on transit. Senator MENENDEZ, from New Jersey, and Senator REED, from Rhode Island, continue to be leaders in fighting for a fair share of funds for transit. Senator TESTER, from Montana, and Senator WARNER, from Virginia, played a key role in ensuring the committee’s transit title moved forward in the bipartisan negotiations.

Our committee, the Banking and Housing Committee—we owe them special thanks. Senator WARNER and Senator VAN HOLLEN, from Maryland, fought to reauthorize funds for Ohio, for “America’s subway,” the Washington, DC Metro system, serving millions in this region; and Senator VAN HOLLEN’s legislation to improve agency safety plans and give workers a stronger voice in safety matters is a big victory for labor.

The chair of the Labor Committee just walked in, and her work on these issues—in this case, bus safety, but safety of workers overall is so very important. We know that busdrivers are often a special target, and protecting them is essential.

Senators WARNOCK and OSSOFF, our newest members on the committee from Georgia, helped us fight for better bus rapid transit and better planning, something that Metro Atlanta cries out for, and they have been loud, strong voices on that.

Senator CORTEZ MASTO contributed provisions to link transportation planning with housing needs.

I want to thank the Presiding Officer, Senator WARREN, and other Members of our caucus who kept advocating for zero-emission buses, not just for Boston but for the whole country. These buses help fight the climate crisis. They help clean the air in neighborhoods plagued by air pollution. People in inner cities, more often than not the quality of the air they breathe is partly because there aren’t many trees; it is partly because of public transit. It is a whole host of issues, but this takes a major step in dealing with that.

I want to thank Senator DUCKWORTH. The Americans with Disabilities Act became law 30 years ago, but some 20 percent of our rail stations still—still—remain inaccessible. My friend Senator CASEY, who sits next to me on the floor—chair of the Aging Committee—he and I were proud to cosponsor her proposal. Her bill provides almost \$2 billion for accessibility grants. Senators DUCKWORTH, CASEY, and I will continue to push for more resources until every transit station is accessible.

I want to thank Senator SINEMA, also a member of our committee, and Senator PORTMAN and other Members of the bipartisan group for bringing this momentous infrastructure package together.

It is obvious how some of the job creation in this package will happen. You build a bridge. You lay down rail tracks. You hire American workers to do it. None of these jobs ever, in an infrastructure plan, can be shipped overseas. But this investment is different from those that have come before it. For the first time, every single one of these projects will come from the strongest-ever “Buy America” rules. It means we get more job creation from Wichita to Seattle, to Boston, to Cleveland. We get more job creation for every single dollar of taxpayer investment.

Throughout my time in the Senate, I have worked to strengthen our Nation’s “Buy America” laws at every opportunity. And there have always been interest groups in this town that have written loopholes into these laws and weaken these laws. For instance, one of the most expensive bridges in American history, the Bay Bridge, in Northern California—a loophole enabled it to be made entirely of Chinese steel, from a company owned by the Chinese Government.

Think about that. You know, we talk all the time about China. Our corporations lobby to get tax breaks and trade agreements to outsource jobs to China. We don’t see the hypocrisy there. We don’t see the hypocrisy in letting China make the steel for the Bay Bridge. But nonetheless, those days are behind us. We know how much steel can go into a bridge and how many steelworkers in Cleveland or Middletown or Gary, Indiana, can be employed to make the steel.

I have worked with colleagues from both sides of the aisle to strengthen

“Buy America” laws in the highway bill, in the Defense Authorization Act, and in the Water Resources and Development Act. These efforts have been piecemeal. That is piecemeal. That is why I asked Senator PORTMAN to join me and Senator BALDWIN in Build America, Buy America—a bill we introduced on President Trump’s Inauguration Day. We have worked with other leaders on Buy America, and we will continue to. I especially call out Senator BALDWIN.

It took 4 years; we are finally getting it right. We are putting in place a clear, comprehensive standard: American tax dollars should support American jobs, period. American tax dollars should support American jobs, period.

These historic investments will support Ohio manufacturers and not their foreign competitors. With potential for hundreds of bridge repair projects alone, this investment in Ohio combine with our strong “Buy America” rules means job creation in every region of my manufacturing State.

It keeps the promise I have made to Ohioans my entire career that I would fight for the dignity of work. When you love your country, you fight for the people who make it work, to ensure the industrial heartland would be the engine of opportunity that drives us into a 21st century economy.

Finally, while I am supporting this bill and am excited for all the investments it will make in Ohio communities and Ohio jobs, I am disappointed that a number of my colleagues rejected the idea that we should pay for this bill by enforcing our country’s tax laws.

I oppose the provision forcing home buyers to pay more each month to help fund investments that wealthy tax cheats should pay for. The money that home buyers pay should be going toward keeping our housing system stable, making sure that everyone has an affordable home.

We can do more. We will do more in the coming months to address affordable housing. Those that were in the Chamber heard Senator SANDERS talking about the importance of housing in the reconciliation bill. I will come down to the floor later today and talk in some detail about that.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank my staff for their hard work on this effort. Many of them had planned August vacations. It is the only time of year where they really get sort of untrammelled, unrestricted time with their families. And all of them have given up something already this month and July. And they are public servants, for sure. They understand commitment. They do this without complaining. Their hard work has been so obvious to me and so obvious to people that pay attention, not necessarily obvious to my constituents, and I want to call them out.

Homer Carlisle was instrumental in helping negotiate and craft the transit title and the bridge legislation. Ben

Lockshin, a fellow from the Federal transit Administration, assisted Homer in these efforts. I want to thank Rebecca Higgins and Mary Frances Repko, with Chairman CARPER’s staff. I have done conference calls with them. My staff works closely with them. Robert Andres, with Chairman WYDEN—Chairman WYDEN is chair of one of the most important committees in this Congress and has been a leader in wanting the wealthy to pay their fair share and wants to make sure it is large corporations that share the taxpayer bill and the tax burden and pay their fair share and less burden on small business. Aaron Goldner, formerly with Senator WHITEHOUSE, and my former aide Leah Hill—they all made the bridge legislation possible.

In my office, Beth Cooper provided technical assistance on the very complicated flood mitigation portion of this bill. Megan Cheney and Chad Bolt, Elisha Tuku, and Corey Frayer provided the analyses and guidance on matters relating to the bill’s pay for. Carolina Young—new on my staff but already making her mark—and Abigail Duggan worked on the “Buy America” provisions.

My staff has worked with others on “Buy America” over the years, but Sam Mulopolus, with Senator PORTMAN’s staff; Brian Conlan with Senator BALDWIN have been particularly helpful. And I want to recognize my former aide, Nora Todd, who led our efforts for much of a decade on “Buy America.”

Through all of this, joining me on the floor today, too, is Laura Swanson, my staff director, who works unbelievable hours with a small child and continues to be a terrific mother and wife and an amazing staff director.

I say exactly the same about our legislative director, Jeremy Hekhuis, who is not a terrific mother but a terrific father with a family and has worked so very, very hard holding all this together for over a decade. I thank my staff. I thank my colleagues.

This legislation—I remember saying to Senator CASEY on March 6 when we passed the American Rescue Plan—I turned to him because of the child tax credit and what we did with pensions and so much else that Senator MURRAY worked on too—I turned to BOB and said: This is the best day of my legislative life with what we are able to do to cut rates of child poverty and so much else. Well, this bill today is almost as big in its scope and is so very important to this country. I am pleased to add my support to it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. MORAN. Madam President, I joined the bipartisan infrastructure group of 22 Senators. I am one of the originals. I did so for a number of reasons. One is how important infrastructure is to Kansas and to the country.

I would highlight the importance of infrastructure investment to my State.

We are in the middle of the country, where our manufactured goods and agricultural commodities need to be able to compete in the world economy. How efficiently and effectively we get those goods and those commodities to market has a huge consequence to the ability for Kansans to earn a living.

Across our State, from Southeast Kansas to Southwest Kansas, from the suburbs of Kansas City in Johnson County and Wyandotte County, all across Northwest and Central Kansas, the demand for improved roads, greater safety, is there. There is a great desire to see that roads and bridges are repaired. County commissioners and trustees of our townships have called to say: We have a bridge. Could you help us do something about that?

So I entered this group of 22 Senators. I was one of the 11 to provide some input and to see that Kansas priorities—that we had a seat at the table and to help negotiate a deal that didn’t raise taxes, that didn’t spend trillions of dollars and focused on actual traditional infrastructure, and to avoid what I fear is to follow, what I would describe as a Democratic wish list. I wanted this to be a smaller, more affordable, paid-for package that was not excessive in scope, didn’t add to the national debt, and did not raise taxes on the American people.

This package includes a number of priorities of mine, including a historic increase in investment in broadband and does provide critical resources to repair our roads, bridges, and airports.

So a desire for a seat at the table, a desire to invest in infrastructure, and I also would add a desire to see that this U.S. Senate, Republicans and Democrats, can work together for a beneficial product for the American people. However, from the very beginning, I outlined criteria that would be needed to be met for my support on any final outcome of the negotiations. My priority was that the bill be paid for and therefore not raise the national debt.

Half of the new spending in this bill is not offset—is not offset—with reduced spending or increases in nontax revenues. The Congressional Budget Office scores this bill as adding a quarter of a trillion dollars to the national debt.

My view has been from the beginning that if we can only find offsets to pay for a certain amount—in this case, about half of the increased spending included in this bill—then the size of our bill should be half of what it is. If you can only find a way to pay for half of what you are spending, then spend less money—spend half as much less money. That, of course, was not the outcome of these negotiations.

Additionally, I had hoped that this bipartisan plan would dissuade Democrats from pursuing their own partisan \$3.5 trillion tax-and-spend spree. The Democratic plan to immediately follow this bipartisan infrastructure bill with their own spending bill significantly

undermines the bipartisan effort to deliver a good outcome for the people of this country.

I had hoped that if we reached a bipartisan agreement—in fact, I had hoped a bipartisan agreement would be reached among the 22 Senators, but pretty early in the negotiations, it became clear that there was significant input and direction from the Biden administration and from the majority leader, the Democratic majority leader in the U.S. Senate. So instead of negotiating with my colleagues and seeking an outcome that we supported, it had to be run by those who are in the White House and those who are the leadership of the Democratic Members of the U.S. Senate.

My desire to see that we pass or reach an agreement to pass a bill that would be paid for did not occur, was not met—that criteria was not met—and the desire to see Democratic Senators say: If we do this together, we are not going to do something else on our own. In fact, some of the things we negotiated in or out of the bipartisan package will now be included in the broader package of the Democratic wish list.

It doesn't make a lot of sense to me to reach an agreement, only to discover then that in a succeeding bill, one that immediately follows, the things that we negotiated in or out are now included or taken out. So the bipartisan nature of the agreement is in many ways offset by the bill that follows.

Reaching an infrastructure deal in a bipartisan way would send a great message that we are capable of working together, and I certainly indicate to my colleagues—I particularly indicate to Senator SINEMA, the Senator from Arizona, how much I appreciate her efforts to pull us together and to lead our meetings in a productive way, and I would say again that I am open to those opportunities.

I am saddened by the fact that this did not reach an agreement that I can support, but I certainly indicate to my colleagues that I am willing to work with Republican and Democratic Members of the Senate to see if, in other instances, we can come together in a way that provides hope for the American people that we can work together on a better product than we were able to reach in this instance.

Unfortunately, to sum up, there is too much spending, too much debt, and therefore there will be too much inflation. My efforts to reach a compromise were honest and sincere, and I regret that we were unable to arrive at a bill that I can support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, recently, Francis Collins, who is the current Director of the National Institutes of Health, said in an interview:

We call on China to really open up, something they have not done, and to be more

transparent about what could be known there.

He was, of course, talking about the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I couldn't agree more with Dr. Collins. The world is entitled to know what happened in Wuhan. However, we have a saying in Tennessee that I think applies here: What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Of course, my question to Dr. Collins is, When will we see transparency from the NIH about its role in the origins of the pandemic?

On June 28, along with my colleagues Senators MARSHALL and GRASSLEY, I wrote to Dr. Collins asking him to open up the books on the NIH's relationship with Chinese researchers.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that this letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JUNE 28, 2021

FRANCIS S. COLLINS, M.D., Ph.D.,
Director, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD.

DEAR DR. COLLINS: On June 23, 2021, the Wall Street Journal reported that Chinese researchers "directed" the National Institutes of Health (NIH) "to delete gene sequences of early COVID-19 cases from a key scientific database," called the NIH Sequence Read Archive. The article states that NIH confirmed that it deleted the sequences. The article further reports that the deleted data includes genomic sequences from SARS-Co V-2 and that these sequences were from viral samples collected in Wuhan "in January and February 2020" from patients in the hospital.

This type of data may contain important and relevant information that could help to better determine the virus's origins. The efforts by Chinese researchers to delete the data demands additional explanation. As you are aware, the Chinese government has failed, from the beginning, to be open and transparent with the world with respect to its role in the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 600,000 deaths, and Congress has spent trillions of dollars to support the American people, businesses, and the economy during these difficult times. Simply put, the American people deserve to know what their government knows about the origins of this global illness. As part of our continuing oversight with respect to NIH's role during the COVID-19 pandemic, we request additional information about the NIH Sequence Read Archive and the actions taken by Chinese researchers to have NIH delete SARS-CoV-2 related data. Accordingly, please answer the following no later than July 12, 2021:

1. Please describe, in detail, how and under what circumstances data can be provided to the NIH Sequence Read Archive and how and under what circumstances data can be deleted from the same.

2. With respect to deleting data from the NIH Sequence Archive, please name all personnel that have the authority to do so. In your answer, please provide the names and titles of the personnel that were involved in the deletion of SARS-Co V-2 data.

3. With respect to the Wall Street Journal report, which Chinese researcher(s) requested that the data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive? When was the request made and when did the deletion occur?

4. After deletion, does the NIH Sequence Read Archive maintain any accessible back-

up of the deleted data? If so, please provide all records to us.

5. Please list all collaborating partners to the NIH Sequence Read Archive.

6. In the past five years, how many researchers and other personnel associated with the communist Chinese government have requested that data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive? Please list by requestor, date, reason, and the information to be deleted. Please also note whether and when that material was in fact deleted.

7. More specifically, in the past five years, how many researchers and other personnel associated with the communist Chinese government have requested that data be deleted from the NIH Sequence Read Archive relating to coronaviruses? Please list by requestor, date, reason, and the information to be deleted. Please also note whether and when that material was in fact deleted.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

MARSHA BLACKBURN,

U.S. Senator.

ROGER MARSHALL,

U.S. Senator.

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,

U.S. Senator.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, this letter asked Dr. Collins about news reports that Chinese researchers were allowed to delete data from a genetic database managed by the NIH. The data they removed included information about the novel coronavirus that caused the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Collins has not responded to the letter, but this isn't the sort of allegation the NIH will be able to ignore into nonexistence. We need a response. We need to know what happened. We need transparency from the NIH, just as the NIH is asking for transparency from China.

Dr. Collins must reveal what definition of "gain of function research" NIH used when it approved funding for the Wuhan Institute of Virology back in 2016. We now know that the research we paid for helped Chinese researchers engineer different versions of coronaviruses.

We also need to know why the Wuhan Institute of Virology was allowed to do dangerous research with American taxpayer dollars in a "biosafety level 2" lab. In case you are not familiar with this designation, one scientist compared the safety and security levels of a biosafety lab 2 to that of a dentist's office.

In 2017, NIH reversed the ban on gain of function research. Why was NIH allowed to make such an important decision unilaterally?

I was relieved to hear Dr. Collins express support for transparency from China, but getting answers out of Beijing won't end the investigation. The American people have suffered for almost 2 years under the threat of illness and economic collapse. It is not too much to demand that their own government live up to the same standards we all agree we should hold our research partners to.

H.R. 3684

Tennesseans want answers from the NIH. They are also still reeling over the price tag of this infrastructure bill. Over the past few days, I have gotten a lot of calls and text messages from people back home. I stood right here and I have spoken about how Tennesseans are confused about this process. I want to amplify something for those who may not have caught my remarks.

Tennesseans aren't talking about process or pay-fors. They don't follow the Senate rules. What they are confused about is why my Democratic colleagues are in such a rush to spend money we do not have on projects the American people never asked for.

I don't want my Democratic colleagues to make a mistake and accuse Tennesseans of not caring about infrastructure. They couldn't be further from the truth on that one. Tennessee is a logistics State. We are roads, bridges, rivers, runways, railways. So believe me when I say Tennesseans care about infrastructure. They are ready to invest in infrastructure. Indeed, the surface transportation bill we passed out of Commerce, Science, and Transportation—they like that. But cobbling together a trillion-dollar vehicle for campaign promises and calling it infrastructure is not something that passes muster with them.

Several of my Republican colleagues who were allowed to negotiate this bill have emphasized that this is a bipartisan compromise. We thank them for their efforts. They want us to understand that it is not a perfect bill. No bill is ever perfect. All of that is true. We understand that. We appreciate the efforts that have gone into this. But, as my colleague from Kansas said, it is not the compromise that is the problem. It is not the efforts; we appreciate those. It is the fact that this is a bill that is too expensive to afford.

The minority leader said it best a few months ago when he compared this bill to a Trojan horse. It looks like one thing, but it is hiding something you don't want getting past the front door.

For months, the Democratic Party has been very public about their intentions for the bill. The word "infrastructure" no longer has any meaning when it comes out of their mouths because everything has been infrastructure at some point—childcare for a while until it took a back seat to court-packing. Now climate action is infrastructure.

Back home, we deal in truth and consequences. Tennesseans have spent the past few days looking at everything hunkered down inside this package, and they know it is not all about infrastructure investment. I am talking to county mayors. I am talking to State reps. I am talking to State senators. They are concerned about 5 percent of the bill for infrastructure and the rest, other projects.

I have spoken numerous times about the ways President Biden and his faithful lieutenants in Congress have tried to diminish freedom in the name of

progress, but I am compelled to remind my colleagues once again that the decision to increase government spending is a decision to increase government involvement and eventually government control. You cannot have the one without getting the other too.

This isn't investing in the future. If anything, this pattern of reckless spending will ensure that the version of the American dream so many of us have enjoyed disappears before our youngest generations are old enough to sign the dotted line on their driver's license application. Our Democratic colleagues aren't paving the way to prosperity for our children and grandchildren with this type of spending; they are building the gateway to socialism, and this bill can be seen as a down payment.

Later this week, if all goes according to plan for my colleague from New York, we will take a vote on a budget that is going to make the American people think they got a discount on the infrastructure package. It is another day, another fight over a multitrillion-dollar spending spree that defies common sense and rejects all notions of accountability.

If the infrastructure bill was the down payment for that gateway to socialism, this budget rips the gates off the hinges and invites the big spenders and central planners to roll right on through. For the low price of \$3.5 trillion, they will have it all: a laundry list of incentives for government dependency, a foot in the door to our homes and families, and an excuse to seize power and centralize it right here in Washington.

My Democratic colleagues really enjoy using the words "free" and "universal" to describe their government handouts. We have universal pre-K, tuition-free community college, universal healthcare, and even a free path to citizenship for illegal immigrants.

The American people see this for what it is, though. It is bait. In exchange for your freedom and your autonomy and all your hopes and dreams, you, too, can become a client of the State. You, too, can live "The Life of Julia," as depicted in the roundly panned cartoon the Obama administration created. The left always signals where they are headed, and, for them, this is their goal, their utopia—total control from daylight to dark, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for the rest of your life.

Our public debt is set to hit \$45 trillion by 2031—\$45 trillion. Deficits are on track to hit \$1.8 trillion—yes, indeed, that is every year—and no budget gimmick on the books can change that. President Reagan's warning about the fragile nature of freedom rings especially true after hearing those numbers.

Here is what he said:

[F]reedom is never more than one generation away from extinction . . . It [has to] be fought for and defended by each generation.

What does that mean?

It means we—each of us, individually, collectively, together—has a duty to future generations to pull out of this skid before we tip the scales away from freedom and toward levels of government dependency and control you can't unravel after fixing a 4-year mistake.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, you know, when a disaster strikes—a tornado or an earthquake or a wildfire—the first thing we do is work to keep people safe, but that is far from the last thing we do. When the storm has passed, we rebuild. We rebuild homes and schools, hospitals, businesses, communities; and, if we are doing our job right, we build them back even better so we are ready when the next crisis strikes. That is exactly what this budget is about—rebuilding our country now stronger and fairer.

We need to pick up where the infrastructure package leaves off by making bold investments in all of our infrastructure. In addition to building roads and bridges and even broadband, we need to build our public health infrastructure and help our local health departments expand their capacity and modernize their data and lab systems and more.

We need to build our affordable housing infrastructure to make sure every family can keep a roof over their head, and it doesn't need to break the bank to do so.

We need to build our school infrastructure to make sure schools don't have lead pipes or mold and do have adequate lighting and electricity and AC systems, not to mention so many other resources students need to learn and grow, like libraries and gyms.

And we need to build our climate infrastructure. The climate crisis is here, and it is an existential threat. If we don't take this opportunity to protect our planet for current and future generations, we may not get another one.

Of course, rebuilding is about more than just infrastructure. We have to build a stronger, fairer country for our workers and our families too. Our Nation is stronger when no worker has to choose between a paycheck and taking care of themselves, a child, or a loved one who is seriously ill; and every worker can afford to take time off after giving birth, a partner's delivery, or adopting a child, which is why we must establish a national paid leave plan.

Our Nation is stronger when every parent can get quality, affordable childcare; every young learner gets a strong start with quality early learning programs; and every adult learner can pursue a higher education, which is why we need to expand quality, affordable childcare and establish universal pre-K, and why we need to open the doors of higher education to even more people, starting by providing tuition-free community college.

Our Nation is stronger when older Americans and people with disabilities have the care they need to live independently in their communities, which is why we need to invest in home- and community-based services and make sure the workers who provide that critical care get fair pay and better benefits.

Our Nation is stronger when healthcare is truly a right and not a privilege, which is why we need to extend the huge healthcare expansion we made in the American Rescue Plan, which has already helped 138,000 people in my home State of Washington save an average of \$90 on their healthcare coverage, and we need to keep pressing for further progress toward universal coverage.

And, of course, our Nation is stronger because of the contributions of so many hard-working immigrants, which is why we need a fair pathway to citizenship for the more than 11 million undocumented residents living here, including Dreamers, farmworkers, those with temporary protected status, and the many essential undocumented workers who do so much to keep our country running.

You know, after a wildfire, would we leave the fire department in ashes, or the schools or the businesses or the homes?

Of course not.

So, after a pandemic and an economic crisis, shouldn't we rebuild our public health departments? Shouldn't we rebuild our economy? Shouldn't we address the deep-seated inequities that have made things so much worse for so many people? Shouldn't we help families get childcare and paid leave and healthcare and housing and citizenship? Shouldn't we build back our Nation stronger and fairer?

That is not a trick question, and it shouldn't be a hard one either. The answer is obvious to anyone who has been listening to people back home.

Democrats are listening. We know what families are going through. We know they want us to act, and that is exactly what we are going to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the devastating tax-and-spend policies we will shortly be debating here.

First, I want to differentiate between the bipartisan infrastructure legislation we are currently debating and the separate, looming debate on my Democratic colleagues' \$3.5 trillion reckless tax-and-spend proposals.

Senators on both sides of the aisle have long agreed to the need to modernize and expand our hard infrastructure, including transportation systems and broadband networks. We have done so in a bipartisan manner. Infrastructure investments have traditionally been accomplished through bipartisan ship and regular order. Traditional hard infrastructure investments in-

clude the funding of roads and bridges, transit, rail, airports, drinking water, and wastewater infrastructure, ports and inland waterways, water storage, and broadband infrastructure.

The bipartisan infrastructure bill we are considering today focuses on those core elements and is built around several vetted, unanimously consented committee-passed bills. It includes a number of priorities important to Idaho, including billions of dollars for roads, highways, and bridges; funding for high-speed internet and broadband infrastructure deployment; millions in water infrastructure, including for groundwater storage and conveyance; funding for resiliency against natural disasters, like wildfires and droughts; a reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools program; and much more.

It does not raise taxes.

It reprioritizes the use of certain unused COVID relief funds from previous spending bills away from bailouts and idle funds and toward supply-side investments that will provide benefits to the American people for many years.

Because this infrastructure spending focuses on long-term productivity rather than near-term demand, it will not be inflationary. In fact, it will counteract the inflationary pressures we are now seeing as a result of the excessive spending in this Congress. This is especially critical right now, as rising prices are impacting families and small businesses across America.

In June, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that consumer prices were up 5.4 percent over 1 year ago—the largest increase since August 2008. Consumer price inflation has been accelerating since the beginning of the year, and American families pay the price. In the past year, gas prices have increased 45.1 percent. The cost for major appliances has increased 13.7 percent. Airfares have increased 24.6 percent, and the list goes on.

A recent University of Michigan survey showed that consumers expect prices to rise 4.8 percent over the next 12 months, and a National Federation of Independent Business survey found that 47 percent of companies are increasing average selling prices, up 7 percentage points from May and the highest share in four decades.

Economists on both sides of the aisle have warned that excessive, nonproductive spending could put us in this position.

And despite these warnings, in March, the Democrats passed nearly \$2 trillion in purported COVID relief spending on top of the nearly \$4 trillion that had already been spent. A fraction of this \$2 trillion was actually pandemic-related.

That poorly targeted package has grown the national debt, spurred inflation, and discouraged workers from returning to the workforce. Now Democrats are proposing to spend an additional \$3.5 trillion to balloon the Federal Government even more, and that is just the advertised price.

According to the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, the Democrats' new legislation will actually cost closer to \$5 to \$5.5 trillion over the next 10 years. Democrats intend to couple this runaway spending with job- and growth-killing tax hikes to create and establish their reckless spree of tax-and-spend policies. They intend to go it alone with this social spending spree through another budget reconciliation process in a 50-50-tied Senate, which is willfully partisan.

Yet, amazingly, despite having the tools to raise the debt limit within this process, Democrats want to ignore the debt implications of their reckless budget. If the Democrats are going to cram down this massive tax-and-spend spree, they will have to deal with the debt limit themselves. Yet they don't include dealing with their irresponsible growth of our debt in their bill.

What about offset proposals?

The Democrats' budget proposals include provisions that will cause immediate and long-term damage to our economy and send many of our most successful businesses—and the jobs they provide—abroad.

One, they propose increasing taxes on all kinds of businesses, large and small, leading to lower wages, fewer jobs, and higher prices for consumers.

Two, they would allow and encourage rival countries to change the international tax system for the worse.

Three, they want to raise our taxes on our businesses in hopes that other countries may raise theirs sometime in the indefinite future, while ceding U.S. taxing rights to our competitors today.

Four, they propose enacting a double death tax, particularly harmful for family farms and small businesses.

Five, they want to substantially increase taxes on investors, entrepreneurs, savers, and retirees.

Six, they want to drastically expand the powers of the IRS, while limiting its accountability, and turn banks into private investigators for monitoring law-abiding Americans.

Seven, their ideas will raise taxes on middle-class individuals and families, and not just those earning over \$400,000.

At the very same time, they want tax relief for some of the wealthy living in the high tax-and-spend States.

And, finally, they are also seeking to impose government price controls on the pharmaceutical industry that will stifle medical innovation.

Let's go back into a little detail on this.

Business taxes. The Democrats plan to hike the tax rate paid by all types of businesses, including corporations, ignoring the fact that a significant portion of the tax burden is paid by workers. As the U.S. Chamber of Commerce notes, most corporations are small businesses, with 84 percent of them having fewer than 20 employees. As to those who actually bear the burden of a corporate tax increase, estimates say

that workers share anywhere from 20 to more than 70 percent of this burden.

A higher corporate tax rate would hit the nest eggs of everyone saving for retirement. This stealthy but very real tax hike would hit retirement savers across the spectrum, falling most heavily on the middle class and the elderly through retirement accounts and pensions, and clearly violating President Biden's pledge not to tax anyone making less than 400,000.

Any business tax increase will directly hit the very small businesses and workers that the administration claims it wants to help.

International taxes. The Democrats' tax plan would reverse the smart policies of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act adopted in 2017, once again raising the relative cost of doing business in America and punishing American businesses selling their products or services overseas. They fail to acknowledge that the tax increases in their plan will rocket the United States back into the outlier position it once occupied compared to peer nations. Once again, we will have the highest tax rates of the developed world. We are very near the top. The Democrats are intent on winning a race to get to the top of the heap in terms of international corporate tax rates.

Their international tax proposal would more than double the minimum rate paid by U.S. businesses on their foreign earnings to 26.25 percent. This hike far outstrips the 15 percent minimum rate promised by some of our largest international competitors at the OECD. If the administration wants to promote economic growth that will benefit American workers and savers, why is it sharply increasing taxes on its global businesses when no other country even levies such taxes?

The administration's international tax proposals seem designed to reignite the job-crushing inversions and foreign acquisitions of American companies that the Obama administration faced. There is no reason to tax our businesses into moving abroad, as the Democrats' proposals will do.

Family farms and small businesses. Today, family businesses passed down at death are subject only to estate tax and not an additional income tax. Instead, a business's tax basis is increased or stepped up to fair market value, sparing the next generation a large capital gains tax bill. President Biden wants to create a double death tax by eliminating the benefits of this step-up in basis, including for small businesses, farms, and ranches passed down from one generation to the next at death.

More insidiously, the Biden plan would tax these businesses on simple inflation, sticking them with a bill for reckless, inflationary tax-and-spend policies enacted by politicians in Washington.

Capital gains tax. For decades, the Republicans and Democrats have recognized the importance of encouraging people to save for their future goals, including starting a business, saving

for retirement, achieving financial independence, or even buying a home or a car.

Members of both parties have long agreed on a key tool to encourage these goals for all Americans, specifically, a lower tax rate on long-term capital gains.

President Biden wants to nearly double this tax rate from 23.8 percent to 43.4 percent, which will be the highest rate—and hear me on this: the highest rate—in a century. In many cases, when combined with similar State taxes, the government would take more than half of an asset's appreciation in taxes. This is the appreciation that lower income, middle-income, and all income categories of workers and earners in the United States will have to pay. This supersized tax hike would be a powerful disincentive to small businesses, savers and retirees, and entrepreneurs and innovators who power our economy, and harm all Americans, regardless of their financial circumstances or goals.

IRS funding and bank monitoring. The Biden administration has proposed nearly \$80 billion in additional IRS funding, of which \$72.5 billion would be accountability-hindering mandatory spending. Nearly doubling the IRS' budget without increasing its accountability opens the door to repeating and supercharging the Agency's past abuses of power.

Further, the administration's proposal would press financial institutions—private-sector financial institutions—into reporting the deposit and withdrawal flows on their customer's accounts of greater than \$600 in value.

Now, think about that. This isn't big corporations. It is not even just corporations. It is small businesses and individuals that have a financial account that has more than \$600 in it. And what we are going to see is a dragnet pulling law-abiding Americans into this, exposing sensitive data to future breaches, burdening financial institutions, and encouraging the growth of shadow banking—what a huge violation of the privacy of all Americans. As if this proposal could not be worse, the data provided to the IRS would have almost no value in fighting tax evasion.

The era of big data should not be viewed as an opportunity for Big Brother.

The SALT deduction cap. While my colleagues are proposing reckless, across-the-board tax increases on businesses and families, they are simultaneously proposing to expand a tax deduction for the wealthiest—those living in high-tax States. Democrats are fighting to reverse the cap on State and local taxes, or what is called the SALT tax—these deductions—stoking a tax break for the very wealthy.

Democratic silence on who benefits from their proposal is telling. Per a 2020 Brookings Institute study, 96 percent of its benefits would go to the top quintile of earners, 57 percent would go to the top 1 percent of earners, and 25 percent to the top one-tenth of 1 percent of earners—a huge tax break for the wealthy.

And, finally, price controls on pharmaceutical manufacturers. Thanks to the genius of science, private-sector innovation, and the success of Operation Warp Speed, America is ready for its comeback. Unfortunately, my Democrat colleagues are proposing sweeping governmental price controls on the very innovators who have enabled our return to normalcy. Under the guise of negotiation, the government would be empowered to set a maximum fair price for drugs and apply bureaucratic standards that determine the value that cures and therapies bring to American lives.

As the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has confirmed, this type of scheme will lead to fewer new medications, threatening access to lifesaving healthcare options for our most vulnerable citizens. One of these forgone therapies could treat pancreatic cancer; another could cure ALS. While every patient should be able to afford lifesaving medications, their proposal has the potential to eliminate the existence of these very inventions and innovations.

Congress should come together in a bipartisan way to make all healthcare services, including prescription drugs, more affordable and accessible, and I have introduced legislation to do just that. We do need to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, but using the savings from this misguided government price control scheme to pay for unrelated partisan priorities is not the answer to the high cost of healthcare.

Before the pandemic, a combination of reduced regulatory burden and pro-growth policies, including the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, helped to create one of the strongest economies of our lifetime, with all-time high median household income, a 50-year low unemployment rate, and real wage gains month after month, especially and most for the low-income workers. Inflation-adjusted weekly median earnings grew 4.9 percent for the 2 years between 2018 and 2019—the fastest 2-year growth rate in real earnings since 1998 and 1999.

Polling showed Americans' general satisfaction at the highest level in 15 years.

We would do the American people a disservice if we mortgaged their future while undermining the foundations of their past successes, and, sadly, this is the approach that many of my colleagues are seeking to take as we move into the next step of this debate.

We should, instead, be building on time-proven, pro-growth policies, not reversing them to fund a reckless spending spree.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I rise to join my colleagues in support of the Build Back Better plan budget resolution, which recognizes that care infrastructure is critical infrastructure.

We know that our economy has not been working for working families. Then, we saw a pandemic make a precarious situation even worse for families across the entire country.

Our economy cannot fully recover and will not survive another pandemic or health emergency if people can't keep their jobs or get back to work. That won't happen until we start providing the economic support that we have actually needed for decades—support like childcare, universal pre-K, and universal paid leave.

Paid leave is what allows people to keep their jobs when they get sick. It allows parents to stay home with children who are ill or forced to learn remotely. It lets hard-working people care for their aging parents. And, right now, far too many people don't have access to it. More than 8 in 10 workers lack access to paid leave, and they are often left to make the very impossible choices of: Do I care for my loved one? Do I stay by the bedside of my mother as she is dying or do I earn a paycheck and feed my children?

Those are choices that we shouldn't be forcing the American workforce to have to make every single day.

So this budget reconciliation will help end the United States' reign of being the only industrialized country in the world that doesn't have access to paid family and medical leave for all workers.

I have been fighting alongside Congresswoman ROSA DELAUNO for years to pass the bill. Our bill is called the FAMILY Act, the model for the Build Back Better plan's paid leave program, which would provide every—nearly every worker with up to 12 weeks of paid leave. It will provide stability to workers, to families, to companies, and to our U.S. economy.

Now, this is the moment that we can actually make it happen. This budget also recognizes the essential nature of the childcare industry. Nearly 27 million people rely on childcare just so they can go to work and feed their children.

First, childcare is not readily available. Childcare deserts and shortages across the country leave families without local options. Before the pandemic in New York, there was one slot for every four children who wanted access to affordable, high-quality daycare. After the pandemic, there was one slot for every eight children who wanted access to affordable, quality daycare. In New York, a year of childcare is often more expensive than a year of in-State college tuition.

Those problems were exacerbated by the pandemic. Staffing at childcare centers, which was already a problem pre-pandemic, is now down 15 percent. This budget will help us make the critical investments that are so long overdue. Childcare investments ensure families have access to high-quality care that cost low- and middle-income families no more than 7 percent of their income.

It also recognizes the nature of childcare as essential work. Childcare providers are essential workers, and they deserve a long overdue raise. This investment is critical to our economic recovery and will help working parents get back to the office, get back to their jobs and know that their children are safe and having access to that critical early childhood education.

Every parent in America knows that if their child has the chance from 0 to 5 to be in early childhood education, every dollar you put into early childhood education results in over \$11 of benefit to society for that individual child over their lifetime. It is such an important investment.

The Build Back Better plan invests in universal pre-K. It will not only help more parents of young children return to work, but it also ensures that those children get that early access to early childhood education, that high-quality learning gives them access to understanding their numbers, their letters, early reading, early math that is essential for them being able to thrive.

These forms of care infrastructure are what make the difference between a family surviving or a family thriving, and that is what this country needs to actually recover from this global pandemic.

These investments are just as important as our investments in roads and bridges and sewers and clean water and clean air and high-speed rail and rural broadband. All of that matters and, together, that is how we recover from this economy. This is the moment to make this once-in-a-generation investment in the future of our families, the future of our middle class, the future of our economy, and this is something that we can do together.

So I ask all of my colleagues to join us in getting the Build Back Better plan over the finish line. It is about our families; it is about our economy; and, most importantly, it is about our future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Maine.

H.R. 3684

Ms. COLLINS. Madam President, at long last, tomorrow morning, I expect that the Senate will approve the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

For far too long, any discussion of transportation infrastructure in this country has been accompanied by the adjective "crumbling." The backlog of needed repairs and upgrades and replacements in my State of Maine and throughout our country is simply enormous.

Americans know far too well the consequences of the chronic underinvestment in our infrastructure. Poor road conditions cost them, on average, hundreds of dollars each year in vehicle repairs and wasted gasoline due to congestion. Structurally deficient bridges often require lengthy detours when they have to be posted. Slow or non-

existent internet connections create barriers to work, healthcare and education.

The recent pandemic has certainly laid bare inequities to high-speed internet in our country. Every administration in recent memory has identified improving our infrastructure and transportation networks as a priority, but time and time again we have seen those ambitious goals thwarted by partisanship.

Well, the Senate has finally broken through the political gridlock and is on the verge of passing a landmark infrastructure package that amounts to a major victory for the American people.

I worked with my colleagues from across the aisle and across the country to produce this legislation. It will be the most significant investment in American infrastructure since the establishment of the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s.

This bill will provide concrete benefits for American families, as well as for our economy, by making historic investments in our Nation's roads; highways; bridges; airports; seaports; waterways; rail; water treatment systems; and, of course, broadband.

This is important not only for American families; it is important for America's place in the world. Many other countries on a per-capita basis invest far more than our country does in infrastructure, including China. So this bill will help to improve our competitiveness, create jobs, and improve our productivity. It represents the culmination of months of bipartisan negotiations and truly is transformational.

For example, the package includes \$110 billion to address the growing backlog of deficient bridges and roads. This includes \$40 billion to improve our Nation's bridges. In my State of Maine, there are 315 deficient bridges and nearly 1,500 miles of poor roads.

This package provides \$25 billion, as well as the flexibility, for our airports so that they can pursue the projects such as rebuilding or extending runways and taxiways or expanding their terminals. This funding will benefit airports of all sizes.

The package also bolsters our rail network by including funding for programs that support crucial capital and rail safety projects. We also included funding for Amtrak's National Network to help address its deferred capital needs and to bring new train cars to State-supported routes, like the Downeaster in Maine.

I am also excited that the bill provides an additional \$95 million to support the University Transportation Centers program. This program harnesses the research and development expertise at our institutions of higher education to improve our infrastructure. The University of Maine, I am proud to say, participates in this program. It is leading the way by pioneering cutting-edge materials to build more durable, environmentally friendly roads and bridges at a lower cost.

I recently participated in a bridge dedication that used the new materials and techniques that had been developed at the University of Maine. This bridge will last far longer. Because of the materials that were used to build it, it has a far lower carbon footprint and is a really exciting development. This program will be better supported by the funding in our bill.

The energy title of our bill will provide critical investments in clean energy demonstration projects and help to protect and harden our electric grid. Notably, \$355 million is included for an energy storage pilot program, which was authorized through a law I authored known as the BEST Act.

I am really excited about this because I believe that energy storage technology will be the breakthrough that we need in the fight against climate change as far as allowing us to integrate new renewables, such as wind and solar, into the electric grid. That will, in turn, help to reduce emissions, but it will also improve the resiliency of our electric grid.

The funding for coastal resiliency included in this bill will help protect our Nation's coastline and coastal communities from rising sea levels, including those in the State of Maine. There is funding that is included for NOAA's Coastal Resilience Fund to help mitigate the impact of storms on our communities and lessen flooding that has been so devastating in many areas of the country.

To further address the infrastructure needs for our ports and waterways, \$7 billion is included for the Army Corps of Engineers to address the large backlog of authorized projects that have yet to receive funding. There is also \$2.25 billion for the Port Infrastructure Development Program.

Maintaining access to clean, reliable drinking water is essential to protecting the health of our public, our environment, our families, our economy. Our agreement includes investments in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

Although Maine is home to some of the cleanest sources of water in the country, the increasing and troubling prevalence of pollutants, like PFAS chemicals—the so-called forever chemicals—require action to keep our drinking water safe.

There has been contamination in Maine in both public and private water systems from PFAS. That is why I worked so hard with Senator SHAHEEN of New Hampshire to provide funding to help clean up this source of pollution.

Finally—and, in my view, one of the most important features of this bill—is the broadband investment. I want to reiterate the significance of our historic \$65 billion investment in broadband.

Senator SHAHEEN and I worked, literally, night and day to negotiate this section with our colleagues here in the Senate and with the administration,

particularly Secretary Raimondo at the Department of Commerce.

This will make a real difference in the lives of Americans, particularly those living in rural areas who do not have access to internet service at all in some areas or who have access only to unreliable, very slow service.

It has become increasingly clear in recent years, and especially in light of the pandemic, that broadband is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. And I can't tell you how many people I have talked to in Maine about this problem.

I talked to a selectman on Swan's Island, who was telling me that the residents of Swan's Island were unable to participate in the telemedicine programs during the height of the COVID pandemic because they simply lacked access to high-speed internet. That is an example where healthcare is affected.

There were families in other rural areas of the State where schools had a hybrid system where families had to drive their children to the library to find a hotspot in order to connect with the internet for online education. One family in northern Maine told me it would cost them \$15,000 to be connected to the internet. They can't afford that. Most people in my State would be unable to afford \$15,000 to be connected to the internet. I also talked to town managers who told me of employers who had decided to locate their businesses and employ people elsewhere because of the absence of high-speed, reliable internet service.

This is why that \$65 billion investment is so important and will have such an impact on people's lives. We have both a deployment section and an affordability section, and both are a necessity.

Ultimately, this bill is about reinforcing the connections that make our country more united. The investments in our roads and bridges will better connect our communities. The investments in our airports will better connect rural and urban regions. The investments in our highways and seaports will better connect manufacturers and their customers and their workers. The investment in high-speed internet will better connect families, friends, coworkers, employers, healthcare providers, students, and educators. This investment package is good for America. It represents a far too rare example of the two parties working together to produce real results for the American people.

I want to take just a final moment to thank those who were particularly involved. I want to thank all of my colleagues for their contributions, but particularly I want to laud the work of Senator ROB PORTMAN and Senator KYRSTEN SINEMA, who led our group of 10 Senators—5 Democrats, 5 Republicans. The other Republican Members, in addition to myself, were Senators MURKOWSKI, CASSIDY, and ROMNEY. On the Democratic side, in addition to Senator SINEMA, were Senators

MANCHIN, SHAHEEN, WARNER, and TESTER. All of us worked very hard, and we are grateful for the ideas and the input that we had from so many of our colleagues.

I also want to thank our staffs. We couldn't have done it without them. They, too, were here night and day. They haven't had a weekend off in a very long time.

It is essential that we make this historic investment, and I urge all of my colleagues in voting tomorrow morning for final passage of this long-awaited, much needed, bipartisan legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. PADILLA. Madam President, I rise today because my home State of California is on fire. Nearly half a million acres have burned in the last month by the Dixie Fire alone. That is more than 10 times the size of the District of Columbia. It is larger in size than the city of Los Angeles. Thousands of Californians have been forced to flee their homes with only the clothes on their backs and the belongings they can carry in their cars. Entire towns have burned to the ground. As of Sunday, Dixie is the largest single-source fire in California's history. California is not alone. The entire Western United States is on fire.

Colleagues, this morning, the IPCC, the world's foremost body of climate scientists, presented a new report. I am hoping you have seen it. There are 195 countries, including the United States, that have agreed on every statement that it makes, and the verdict could not be clearer: Climate change is happening, and we must act now.

As the report says, in more than 1,000 centuries, the Earth has never seen a decade as hot as we have seen in the last 10 years. Scientists can show that particular disasters are fueled by climate change. The heat wave that is fueling fires, destroying crops, and sending areas across California into drought—that is on us. Devastating floods from Texas to Central Europe—those are on us.

We have pushed our planet to this point, and if we continue to stall, the pace of recordbreaking catastrophe will only increase. This is planet Earth's 10-alarm fire. Yet, my Republican colleagues pretend that they can't see the smoke blowing across the country—smoke that is visible from space.

But the good news is, we have a Democratic majority, and we know how to fight this fire. If we race to zero out our carbon emissions, we can slow the pace of climate change. We can even bring down temperatures by the middle of the century. But our path to avert a catastrophic cycle is narrowing by the day. We must act boldly and with urgency to tackle this crisis head-on.

Across the country, across industries, and across the world, we need to end our dependence on fossil fuels. We also need to aim high and fully fund transformational infrastructure that will allow us not just to survive this transition but to come out better than we were before. On a zero-emissions schoolbus, students won't have to breathe dirty air. In an economy rebuilt to meet this challenge, millions of Americans will work in high-paying, sustainable jobs.

Sometimes, I have worried that we have grown numb to the idea of the climate crisis. If we truly understood the meaning of those words, how could we even contemplate business as usual? If my colleagues across the aisle were to listen to scientists, how could a single one of them argue that we need to spend less on climate?

As many of you know, my wife and I are raising three sons, trying to raise three gentlemen. Today, they are age 14, 8, and 6 years old. We are trying to get them ready to go back to school. Protecting them and giving them every opportunity to thrive is the cause of my lifetime. But the IPCC report makes clear that we will blow through the 1.5 degrees of global warming by the year 2040—it is right here—no matter what we do today.

Come 2040, my sons will be ages 33, 27, and 25. I think about what their lives will be like at that stage—just starting their careers, maybe starting their own families. What will their adulthood look like?

If we act now, we have a chance to turn the tide to begin the planet's recovery as my children—my children—reach middle age. If we fail, they will face a world of accelerating disasters; up to 4 degrees of warming, the report says—4 degrees.

Now, as an engineer, I understand how deadly serious it is to upset the delicate balance of our environment, but if 4 degrees does not sound significant to you, just listen to the scientists warning of what 4 degrees of warming will create: global conflict over food, water, and safe shelter; millions of climate refugees and desperate migrants.

Failure is not an option. I refuse to tell my boys that we knew what to do but could not muster up the political will to act. I refuse to leave to them a world where their lives are defined by climate disaster and where they fear that every summer will bring the fire or drought or storm that consumes their home. I refuse to leave that world for my children or for anyone's children. That means time is of the essence.

Climate cannot be on the chopping block of any budget. It is nonnegotiable. So let's rise to meet the challenge of our generation. We cannot, we will not let our home burn.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Madam President, on a different topic, I rise to speak today on the budget resolution that will soon come

before us and the opportunity that it represents to finally provide a pathway to citizenship for millions of our neighbors, friends, and family members.

I rise today on behalf of the people who are the subject of our immigration debate and the immigrants who have lived and worked in communities throughout the United States for years, sometimes decades, while stuck in a limbo that Congress has created.

Our Nation depends on the labor of immigrants. There has been bipartisan agreement on this for generations. But while our Nation depends on the labor of immigrants, we do not provide the pathways to citizenship that these individuals and their families have earned. Today, we stand on the brink of a historic opportunity to adopt long overdue reforms to our immigration system.

I rise to share just a few stories of the people on whom our Nation depends and for whom we must act.

In May, I had the honor of welcoming Rose Tilus to testify before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and Border Safety, the Subcommittee which I chair.

Rose was born in Haiti but fled gang violence and political instability at the age of 17. Alone, in an unfamiliar country, she dreamed of becoming a nurse, but Rose's immigration status kept that dream out of reach.

For 10 years, she sustained herself working as a housekeeper and as a babysitter to make ends meet. But Rose's life changed in 2010, when a devastating earthquake in Haiti allowed her to obtain a work permit under a program called temporary protected status, or TPS.

Now, she seized this opportunity to return to school and fulfill her dream of becoming a nurse and going out to serve and care for others in nursing homes, in hospitals, in community health centers.

Now, while Rose's story is the story of the American dream, her legal status in this country remains all too temporary.

Our Nation's economy has always depended on the dreams, the dedication, and the contributions of immigrants. No State knows this better than my home State of California, which also represents the fifth largest economy in the world and which nearly a quarter of America's immigrants call home.

Immigrants make up 27 percent of California's population, and, yes, they are essential to our success in every industry, from farm workers in the Central Valley to tech innovators in the Silicon Valley, to construction and domestic workers throughout the State, and to nurses and teachers, and more.

In fact, the COVID-19 pandemic has made us a country that relies even more on the essential work of immigrants. More than 5 million undocumented workers have held jobs that the Federal Government deems essential during the pandemic.

TPS holders, like Rose, who care for our loved ones in hospitals and nursing

homes; DACA recipients, like Erika Henriquez, a medical assistant who works helping to distribute COVID tests and lifesaving vaccines; farm workers, like Vicente Reyes and his parents, who show up to work every single day to keep grocery store shelves stocked and for us to be able to put food on our table—as has been the case since the founding of our Nation, immigrants are serving at the heart of the American story.

An overwhelming bipartisan majority knows that people like Rose, Erika, and Vicente have earned the right to live here without fear of deportation. Seventy percent of Americans support creating a pathway to citizenship for TPS holders, for Dreamers, and farm workers. That includes a majority of Democrats and Republicans and Independents.

Colleagues, right now, we have an opportunity to provide stability and security for the very workforce that the Department of Homeland Security, beginning during the Trump administration, has deemed essential to our Nation's economy and security. So as we write a reconciliation bill to create an equitable and sustainable economic recovery, we must include immigration reform. We have strong arguments and precedent from this very body in our corner.

The logic is simple: Providing a pathway to citizenship is a direct government action, not some carrot-and-stick approach involving private businesses and private actors.

Newly eligible immigrants would pay fees directly to the U.S. Government, as part of this direct government action, which would then be processed by government employees. Every step of this process involves direct government action and direct government revenues, expenditures, and personnel.

And by expanding pathways to citizenship, we will grow our economy and improve the workplaces for all. That is precisely the spirit and the intent of the infrastructure investments that we are developing as part of the budget reconciliation bill.

Research by the Center for American Progress shows that providing a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, TPS holders, farm workers, and all essential workers will boost GDP by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. It will raise wages for all American workers. It will create 400,000 new jobs, and it will generate billions of dollars of spending and tax revenue, fueling our economic recovery.

We have more than just an opportunity; we have an obligation to pass meaningful immigration reform as part of the upcoming reconciliation bill—for Rose; for Erika; for Vicente; for the millions of essential workers and long-term residents who lack permanent status; for the bipartisan majority of Americans who support reform for their immigrant friends, families, and neighbors; and for every one of our constituents, because all Americans will see the economic benefits of immigration reform.

(English translation of the statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

Madam President, we have more than an opportunity—we have an obligation—to pass meaningful immigration reform as part of the upcoming reconciliation bill.

For the millions of essential workers and long-term residents who lack permanent status.

For the bipartisan majority of Americans who support reform for their immigrant friends, families, and neighbors.

And for every one of our constituents—because all Americans will see the economic benefits of immigration reform.

I recently met with President Biden in the Oval Office to discuss California's immigration needs. And I am so thankful for President Biden and Vice President HARRIS's unequivocal support for including immigration reforms in the budget reconciliation process.

As I said, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to bring security to millions of federally recognized essential workers and their families.

I urge my colleagues to join me in recognizing the essential work and economic contributions of immigrants by opening the pathway to citizenship and the American dream.

Thank you.

I now yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

TRUMP INVESTIGATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Last week, Judiciary staff interviewed Jeffrey Rosen, Trump's former Acting Attorney General, and Mr. Rosen's Deputy at the Justice Department, Rich Donoghue. These interviews were done as part of the Democrats' never-ending series of investigations into former President Trump.

Their obsession with him has been very consistent, I will give them that. So, too, are the Democrats' public comments that grossly mischaracterized—at least for now—the state of the evidence.

I will start with a little history. This country has had to deal with Democrats' obsession with destroying Trump for much too long. In the process, I fear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have done and will do lasting damage to our political system.

For example, in May 2017, then-Ranking Member FEINSTEIN and I met with then-Director Comey about Crossfire Hurricane. At that classified briefing, Comey said Trump was not under investigation. But that didn't stop the Democrats from publicly saying that Trump was under investigation.

And because Comey kept the answer classified, he couldn't and didn't rebut it. But Democrats knew it was a lie, and they kept on saying that lie until Trump fired Comey because Comey wouldn't make the fact that Trump wasn't under investigation public.

Unfortunately, the Democrats' big lie eventually got them what they wanted because Comey then helped orchestrate an investigation over his firing.

Day after day, year after year, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle

misled the country about the true facts relating to the Crossfire Hurricane. In doing so, they undermined their credibility. But, somehow, they kept investigations going, along with an all-too-suppliant press.

My staff has participated in these staff-led interviews that have occurred in the last week, and I have been briefed on the matters at hand. I was also at the Rosen interview.

Within hours of Saturday's Rosen interview, the Democrats were already on television and in papers talking about the substance of the interviews. In their public comments, they provided politically slanted mischaracterizations about where the investigation currently stands.

I would like to specifically note that the chairman of the Committee, Senator DURBIN, said, in part, to CNN on Sunday about the Rosen interview that "the Justice Department had set it up for us and said we're waiving any privilege. He"—meaning these people being interviewed—"can speak to any issue. We're not holding back."

At the Donoghue interview on Friday, the Justice Department, contrary to what I just stated to you, objected to my staff's questions on several occasions and prevented Donoghue from answering. So to go back to what I said from the quote on CNN, it had been set up "for us and said we're waiving any privilege. He can speak to any issue." But when it comes to some of the questions my staff was asking, that wasn't true.

The same happened at least once in the Rosen interview. And I believe the Justice Department made an objection even to a Democrat-led question in Donoghue's interview. So we were not able to ask any questions as we were promised.

So when the Democrats say these witnesses can "speak to any issue," well, apparently that is not the case. The Biden administration and its Justice Department have waived executive privilege for these witnesses to speak about close and intimate conversations that the President had with his advisers.

If you get even a little bit away from Trump, then, in your questioning, well, then the Justice Department doesn't want Congress to know the facts. You see what I mean by saying that Justice objected to some of my staff's questions?

Mind you, now, the Justice Department and other executive Agencies consistently refuse to produce records to Congress, claiming what we call deliberative process. When it comes to Trump, the usual order doesn't apply.

Given the new executive privilege position that the Biden administration has created here, it is entirely possible that at some point in the future, we could all be talking to President Biden's closest advisers about their internal deliberative process. Or is there a double standard? I have to laugh a little bit at that possibility, knowing

how my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will complain about how such a decision to seek information is political in nature.

With respect to Trump and what was said at these high-level meetings, those are the types of meetings where all kinds of things are discussed. That is the whole point. The President has every right to discuss ideas and strategies with his closest advisers. The President, whether that President is a Democrat or a Republican, should feel unrestrained to bring ideas to his closest staff for robust discussion.

Eventually, the facts will come out, and Trump will have to address them, good or bad, depending on the facts at hand. However, the essential question that should be asked is, What was the final decision? And that is my major concern about the recent public comments coming out of these interviews I have discussed relating to this new Trump investigation.

Unlike my Democratic colleagues, I won't discuss the evidence publicly at this point in time, but let me remind the American public with a couple already-public points.

Did Trump fire Acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen? No, he did not fire him.

Did Trump fire Rich Donoghue, Rosen's Deputy? No, he did not fire Rich Donoghue.

Also, on August 7, 2021, a CNN article states—now, this is about those interviews that I have been talking about that happened in the last week. From CNN: "The men testified that in their interactions with Trump"—I had better start over again or we will get this wrong.

"The men testified that in their interactions with Trump, he didn't order them to do anything illegal and eventually accepted their advice that the Justice Department couldn't take actions to claim fraud when it had no evidence of it."

In other words—that is end of quote; I want to just interpret—claim fraud in the last Presidential election because there was no evidence of fraud.

Incredibly, one of the same committee Democrats who spread the Trump lie today said criminal prosecutions could come out of this investigation.

If the facts eventually fit the Democrats' narrative that they so badly want to be true of their narrative, then they fit. It is what it is. But I haven't seen anything backing up their misleading conclusions from either what I saw at the interviews or what my staff has reported to me from those interviews over the last week.

Now, until that point comes that the Democratic narrative proves out to be what they want it to be, the Democrats should quit trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, and they need to stop violating committee rules and protocols.

Because of this, why would any witness want to testify now, at the risk of their words being leaked and twisted to

satisfy a partisan agenda? Facts and evidence matter, not speculative, partisan cheap shots.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Madam President, I am here to talk about the Build Back Better proposal and the budget resolution that we will shortly take up, but let me just respond briefly to my good friend and colleague from Iowa's remarks on the interview that was conducted with Jeffrey Rosen on Saturday and the previous interview with Rich Donoghue.

I agree completely that the facts and the evidence are what are important here, and this investigation is supremely significant. I hope that we will join, on a bipartisan basis, to follow the facts and the law wherever they lead and encourage voluntary cooperation by the witnesses and collect all of the documents and other evidence that is necessary to fairly and fully present the truth to the American people. They deserve to know what we have heard so far, which amounts to a chilling and shocking picture of a President seeking to corrupt the Department of Justice and overthrow an election. That much has been clear from the evidence that we have seen.

But I agree that we should not talk about the specific facts at this point because it is an ongoing investigation. And I hope that we will join, in a bipartisan way, not only to encourage voluntary cooperation but to seek testimony and documents by subpoena where necessary, where, as a matter of resort, if that evidence is denied, we need to do so because the interests of our Nation are best served by the truth.

All of it should be made public. Eventually, these transcripts from interviews and other evidence should be made public so that the American people can see the truth. I know that my colleague from Iowa has been a staunch and steadfast champion of whistleblowing, of making available the truth to the American people. Nobody in this body has been a stronger advocate of whistleblowers and protecting them so that the American people could see the truth than my colleague from Iowa. So I am hopeful that we will work together toward that end.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Madam President, the Build Back Better proposal that will soon be coming before the Senate is literally a milestone for this country.

The bipartisan infrastructure proposal that we will shortly pass is transformative for our Nation and for Connecticut. It will enable us to do long-overdue work on our roads and bridges, our railroads and broadband, on the physical assets that are essential to this country creating jobs and remaining competitive around the globe. This work has been too long delayed, and I will be proud to support it.

I thank all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have contributed

so critically to making this vote possible; final passage of a measure that will enable the bridge across the Connecticut River to be truly safe and reliable; the Mixmaster in Waterbury—so-called because it mixes several roads at once—to be finally done; a proposal that will enable, we hope, eventually, the tracks between New Haven and New York to be really reliable, to be maintained properly.

On every one of those transportation byways, there are people who depend on them, people who are going to work or to visit their family. Those people are, at the end of the day, who this infrastructure serves. And the freight that will be on railroads or the goods and produce transported on our highways go to people. They serve our economy. They create jobs. We need to do much more for those people.

Just today in the New York Times, in the Business section, there is an article about a young mother who wants to go back to work, reenter the workforce, but she has two children. One is awaiting the beginning of school, and the other, she feels, needs and deserves daycare before she can go back to work. That road that enables her to drive or the railroad, to commute, won't be a link to the workplace for her until she has daycare.

Our economy is interconnected in ways that we understand intuitively when we look at individual people, but too often, we have mounds of paper—no longer for all of us truly paper but mounds of print—and numbers and statistics. The real story is in that young mother whose account is so important to us, the human story.

Universal daycare, paid family leave, affordable medical care, and housing—they are also the stuff of human needs. They are part of our human assets.

Seniors need dental care and eyeglasses and hearing aids so that they can appreciate all of the benefits that we are trying to bring them through this infrastructure program.

The American people need jobs so that they can afford prescription drugs, and the cost of prescription drugs needs to be lower so they don't have to make these choices that we describe day after day between paying the mortgage and putting food on the table and clothing their kids.

The pandemic has affected health, food, shelter, and the financial and overall security of families across the country. It has taken a toll on small businesses. They, too, need help. The Restaurant Revitalization Program should be replenished and small businesses given a lifeline they need because they have been so direly injured and threatened.

We need to build back America and the assets—the roads and bridges but also the systems—that serve Americans, and we need to build it back better.

I am proud to support this budget resolution that will make investments for working families, the elderly, our environment.

Over the past year, I have spoken to countless families who need that childcare and providers who furnish it across the northeast. Childcare is critical not only to those jobs and the people who fill jobs, but also to the emotional and educational development of children—allowing moms and dads, and grandparents, to go back to work, but also for children to have the basics in preparation for education that they need.

By establishing a universal pre-care system and providing families with incentives, like the child care tax cuts, to help them afford care, we can ensure that children are prepared for success and parents can go to work.

But it isn't enough to ensure that families can just afford childcare. We have to ensure they are able to live healthy lives. And we know healthcare is complicated; it is confusing; it is expensive, especially for our aging seniors and people with disabilities and our fellow Americans with preexisting conditions.

Over this past year, we learned clearly and dramatically how resource-deprived our healthcare system has become—individuals forced to make choices between keeping a roof over their head or going to the doctor or paying for medications. No American family should be forced to make those choices.

And we need to invest. It is not about spending; it is investing in our healthcare system. This budget proposal will accomplish exactly that goal.

Lower prescription drug costs, lowering those burdens, providing broader access to medical providers, including that dental care, hearing aids, and vision for individuals—all individuals—on Medicare should be our paramount goal.

And it is critical that home healthcare workers and patients understand their value. Individuals with disabilities were left struggling to find affordable home- and community-based services throughout the pandemic. We need to appreciate the home care workers and support them and pay them adequately, just as we need to provide that home care for seniors who need it. Healthcare is more than access to care; it is the basic system that provides that access.

And there should be no delay when we are talking about the air we breathe and the water we drink, because those assets also are essential to healthcare.

Rail will be supported—better railroads, tracks, cars—by this proposal that we are passing today or tomorrow, but there is more that needs to be done to ensure high-speed rail. Right now, the link between New Haven and New York is slower than it was 50 years ago. We need to make sure that it is quicker—not just more reliable, but faster and more reliable and safer.

Too often, the impacts of unsafe air and unhealthy drinking water fall on minority and low-income communities.

They have disproportionately faced adverse impacts from public and environmental health grants, and the American people are counting on our leadership to authorize funding for investment in programs that support clean energy resources. Climate change is an enemy that we must conquer, just as we are working to conquer the pandemic.

In the Senate, I have worked with the administration to meet the goal of conserving 30 percent of our country's lands and 30 percent of our waters within the next decade. That goal is ambitious, but it is a vital effort that takes an important step toward reducing environmental justice and ensuring healthy lives for all.

This proposal is comprehensive, and that is exactly what is needed now—a comprehensive program that deserves our support and our leadership. We must invest in our country's leadership by putting the American people and what they need—childcare, healthy homes, and environments—put it first.

I am proud to support this proposal, and I look forward to advancing it on the Senate floor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I appreciated the comments from my colleague from Connecticut. And he talked about both the bipartisan infrastructure bill that is on the floor of the Senate and will be voted on tomorrow morning, and he also talked about the budget proposal that is also going to be considered by the Senate this week.

I want to start by just being sure that those two are distinguished because there is a big contrast between them. The bipartisan infrastructure package, I believe, is a sensible approach to restoring our Nation's infrastructure, as we will talk about in a moment. And that legislation, again, is meant to be voted on tomorrow morning.

The other proposal is the \$3.5 trillion, or more, budget resolution that will be partisan—not bipartisan—that is being proposed by the Democrats, which is a tax-and-spending extravaganza.

And my concern is, not only does it spend a lot of money we don't have—and not on long-term assets, like infrastructure, but on social programs—but, also, it raises taxes substantially. In fact, it raises taxes more than taxes were cut back in 2017, which created such a strong economy going into the pandemic. And I really do worry about what is going to happen to our country should we do that.

The bipartisan infrastructure package has no tax increases. The \$3.5 trillion budget resolution has these huge new taxes. I will tell you, most economists believe that the tax reform and tax cuts back in 2017 led to not just an incredibly strong economy, but an inclusive economy.

Going into the pandemic, February of 2020, we not only had historically low

levels of unemployment for certain groups in our economy—Blacks, Hispanics, and others—we had a 50-year low on unemployment overall. We had the lowest poverty rate ever recorded in the United States of America. We started recording it back in the fifties.

We also had wages that were going up consistently, more than 3 percent annually for 19 straight months going into the pandemic. That was fantastic.

In my home State of Ohio, we had seen flat wages or even declining wages when you take inflation into account for years, probably a decade and a half. So things were working. And even coming out of this pandemic, most economists had thought that, Wow, we have a pretty darned resilient and resurgent economy here.

And you see the economic growth numbers. Last month and this past quarter—I mean, the economy is doing just what we had hoped it would do coming out of the pandemic. To raise taxes now and to get rid of these tax cuts and tax reforms—importantly, tax reforms as well that created this strong opportunity economy—is a huge mistake.

So I would just draw a very distinct contrast between what my colleague and friend from Connecticut was talking about because he kind of mixed the two—one is infrastructure that is bipartisan, no taxes; the other is a different kind of spending—social spending—that we cannot afford and on top of the huge new tax increases.

So I hope that we will choose to vote tomorrow on the infrastructure package in a bipartisan way because it is landmark and needed legislation in fixing our Nation's roads, bridges, railroads, our ports, our waterways, our electrical grid, our broadband network, and more.

And I am proud of the work the Senate has done on that. It will be a lasting bipartisan achievement to help the people we represent. It is going to improve the lives of all Americans. It is long-term spending to repair and replace and build assets that will last for decades.

In doing so, it makes life better for people. It improves the life of the mom or dad who commutes to work and gets stuck in rush hour every day and would much rather be spending that time with their family. It improves the lives of people who are tired of those potholes. We all want to fix those potholes. We all hate them.

One quick story there. When I am asked how I got into public service, I often relay a story that when I was 7 or 8 years old, I remember driving with my mom on a rough road and telling her: Someday, Mom, I want to fix those potholes.

And she loved to tell that story.

That was my first exposure to what it could be like in public service, being able to fix potholes. Unfortunately, I then went on to public service at the Federal level in the House and the Senate and two Bush White Houses, and I never got to fix any potholes.

Maybe this legislation is taking it full circle because it will be fixing potholes, and it will make driving more safe.

There is a story I want to relate. Recently, in Cincinnati, OH, a guy named Howard Krueger was driving along I-75 South, and a big piece of concrete fell down from a bridge called the Western Hills Viaduct, which is in terrible shape. It is one of our crumbling infrastructure projects we have to fix. A big piece of concrete hit his windshield. Thank God it didn't come through his windshield or kill him, but it shattered part of his windshield. He actually pulled off the road to go try to find the concrete, to get it off the road for someone else, and to talk to the work crew that he assumed had dropped it. He went up and looked up, and there was no work crew; it was just concrete falling from the bridge.

Infrastructure—it matters to people. It is about safety. That truckdriver, who leaves his family to go on a long haul, he wants to have a road and bridge that is safe.

We recently had another accident in Ohio. It was on the Brent Spence Bridge; two trucks colliding. There is no shoulder left on that bridge because it is carrying twice the number of vehicles it was meant to carry—twice. It is functionally obsolete, and yet we have talked about it for 20 years and nothing has happened. After 20 years of talking about it, it is time to get something done.

Here in this town, we have talked about infrastructure being improved for a long, long, long time—longer than 20 years. In fact, every President in modern times has proposed a big infrastructure package, and yet we never seem to get it done.

Donald Trump actually proposed a \$1.5 trillion infrastructure package. This one we are talking about today is \$548 billion. He is a developer. He understands the need for infrastructure, to make investments in hard assets, because it comes back to help the economy.

So whether you are that truckdriver, or whether you are that mom or dad, or whether you are somebody who lives in a rural and underserved area of our country because you don't have access to broadband and you can finally now get it for your schoolwork or your work-work or for your healthcare, this is going to make a difference.

It improves our overcapacity ports. Right now, at our seaports, ships are backing up. If you are trying to get a product and you are a consumer and you are wondering why you are not getting it, that might be the reason.

And guess what. It also invests in our overwhelmed southern border land ports, with \$3.85 billion to GSA and Customs and Border Protection. So for those of you concerned about the southern border and what is happening there, this infrastructure bill does help. It helps with our land ports and our seaports and, therefore, helps Customs and Border Protection.

We also have more for water infrastructure in this legislation—clean drinking water. Lead pipes is a big issue in my home State of Ohio, as it is in other States. That is dealt with here—remediation of the lead pipe danger and risks.

There is a lot in here that helps people, helps make their lives better.

Very importantly for me, it also makes our economy more efficient by fixing that bridge, by fixing that port. When you make the economy more efficient, the economy becomes more productive. When the economy is more productive, you have higher GDP. When you have higher GDP, you have more taxes coming into the economy than you would have had otherwise. That is what happens with infrastructure spending, if it is done right.

It has been made clear in poll after poll this is something that actually brings our country together. According to a CNBC poll, 87 percent of Americans think it is important that we invest in improving our crumbling roads and bridges. A month or so later, a CBS poll found 87 percent of Americans support more Federal spending on repairing roads and bridges. And an Associated Press poll found 8 in 10 Americans—80 percent—favored plans to increase funding for roads, bridges, and ports and for pipes that supply drinking water.

So, of course, it is popular because it affects their lives, and they know it.

And we need the investment right now. The American Society of Civil Engineers gives our infrastructure a C-minus and projects our economy stands to lose more than \$10 trillion in GDP by 2039 should we fail to invest in repairs. We have fallen to 13th in the world in a report card on infrastructure while China continues to spend much more than we do as a percent of their GDP on infrastructure. Why? They want to have a more efficient economy. We want to be able to compete and win the global competition. We, too, should be sure infrastructure is up to speed.

The need for fixing and repairing our Nation's infrastructure is clear. It is no surprise, again, that these Presidents, through the modern times, including Donald Trump, have suggested it. Frankly, I believe Donald Trump's advocacy in infrastructure helped changed the way many in the Republican Party view these kinds of investments. This investment in repairing and upgrading our infrastructure will also have a real and lasting impact on our economy long term.

There is a lot of discussion about infrastructure right now. Again, making the economy more efficient, more productive, growing the economy, that is what economists would call, by investing in hard assets and jobs, the supply side. These are supply-side investments. This is why economists have said, including Michael Strain of the Conservative American Enterprise Institute, this will be counterinfla-

tionary. That is important to note too. By the way, this money is not going to be spent next year. It is not going to be spent hardly at all the next year. It is going to be spent over 5, 10, 15 years on these long-term projects.

There is one recent study by Association of Equipment Manufacturers finding that this legislation will create about half a million new jobs by 2024. So it is also about new jobs in industries ranging from construction, plumbing, electrical engineering to software development.

Importantly, it accomplishes these goals while avoiding the tax hikes that will kill our economy, destroy jobs, and undermine our competitiveness around the world.

That is why I started talking about the \$3.5 trillion package that is wrong-headed, in my view, in part because of the spending, but in part because of what it would do to our economy at a time when we are trying to get back on our feet postpandemic.

We are going to provide billions in funding for some of our most pressing hard infrastructure needs, like \$110 billion in new spending over the next 5 years to construct, rebuild, and maintain our roads and highways.

I heard one of my colleagues say only 24 percent of this money goes into roads and bridges and ports. That is just not true. The number actually is about 42 percent into roads and bridges alone. This is going to make a big difference in my home State of Ohio. We have 123,000 miles of roads. Traffic congestion costs motorists an estimated \$4.7 billion each year in lost time and wasted fuel, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. The same group, the Society of Civil Engineers, says there are currently more than 46,000 bridges in our country that are considered structurally deficient and in "poor condition." Yet 178 million trips are taken on these deficient bridges every single day.

Ohio is No. 2 in the Nation in the number of bridges. We have a lot of them, but nearly half of those are not in good condition. That is why I am pleased this legislation does provide for new funding for our bridges. It will work competitive grants to improve the bridges that would help with all of our bridges but particularly a huge problem in Ohio, which is the Brent Spence Bridge—this dangerous bridge I talked about where there are no shoulders anymore. It is bearing twice the number of vehicles per day as it was constructed to do. It was considered structurally obsolete for years, for two decades. It is time to fix it.

We also do something here that is very important to stretch that Federal dollar and to take out some of the inefficiency in the way we construct our roads and our bridges and other infrastructure. We make needed reforms to the Federal permitting process and give project sponsors more certainty to help them create more jobs and develop our Nation's infrastructure with less

costs. This was a priority of the Trump administration that was never codified into law.

But in this bill, we actually expand and improve what is called FAST-41, which was in the last highway bill—not the one currently but before. But it has a sunset on it, and these permitting reforms have worked. They lowered the amount of time and saved billions of dollars for key permitting projects. We make this a permanent part of our law.

Also, the surface transportation bill itself has additional permitting reform in it. This, frankly, is better permitting reform than we have been able to get for years, even when we had a Republican President, Republican Congress. I am very pleased that that is part of this legislation, and it should be. All Americans should support that.

Taking the average from 2 years—from currently 6, 7, 8 years down to 2 years for a project, why doesn't that make sense? Everybody should be for that.

We also made necessary investments in the future of our economy on the digital side by increasing access to broadband services. In Ohio, that is really important. We have a bunch of counties and about 18 of them are unserved and we have probably another 20 that are underserved.

In Appalachian Ohio, we need internet. We need it fast enough so people can start a business, so kids can use it for school, so veterans can use it to get their healthcare and not have to drive into the big city.

These are only a few highlights. And I could go on, but the bottom line is we are dedicating this \$548 billion in infrastructure spending over the next 5 years toward a wide range of projects that will collectively have a positive impact on our economy and on the American people.

This has been a different sort of process, I acknowledge that. And, frankly, a lot of this, I think, should have been done directly through committees, particularly with regard to transit, with regard to broadband. In other areas, we simply picked up the work of the committee—surface transportation, as an example, much of the work by the Commerce Committee, the EPW Committee, and others, the ENR Committee, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Many of us worked hard to ensure that this was a truly bipartisan project but also that we got the best input from all the experts here in the Congress. I would have drafted this bill a little differently if it had been just me. I am sure everybody feels that way about it. It was a true bipartisan project and, therefore, there were concessions made on both sides.

But I am proud of the broad support it has received in this Chamber. I am proud of the broad support it has received from the outside. More than 100 industry associations, unions, and trade groups have already come forward to endorse the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Among them

are the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, the AFL-CIO Building Trades Council, the American Farm Bureau, the Conference of Mayors, and National Governors Association, on and on and on. They comprise advocates for businesses of all sizes, workers, farmers, Governors, mayors, engineers, conservationists, truckers.

I think it is safe to say we have an impressive coalition that wants this legislation passed for all the right reasons. They want to see this investment in our country. They know it is the right thing to do for our economy, for our future. I thank all of the stakeholders who have endorsed this legislation for their support. Because of all these combined efforts, tomorrow, I believe, we will be getting it right for the American people, for our economy, and for the future of our great country.

I look forward to seeing this legislation pass the Senate tomorrow, and I urge the House to pass it soon so that it can move to President Biden's desk for his signature.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT
NO. 2656 TO H.R. 3684

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, we had a big controversy in the infrastructure bill over how to go about imposing transaction reporting requirements on crypto exchange programs.

I am very pleased to be able to report that a group of us reached a bipartisan agreement: Democrats and Republicans, the Biden Treasury, and the administration is on board.

I want to thank the cosponsors of the amendment that brought everybody together on this: Senator WARNER, Senator LUMMIS, Senator PORTMAN, and Senator SINEMA are all in agreement on this. I should point out I appreciate Senator RON WYDEN's work throughout this entire process.

Let me just give a little bit of context here, and then I am going to yield to some colleagues and then ask unanimous consent that we adopt this commonsense change.

To start off, we have very broad agreement, probably unanimous agreement, that centralized digital asset exchanges, when they behave as brokers, should be required to report transactions of their customers just like ordinary brokers do: stockbrokers, bond brokers. The problem is that the underlying text of this bipartisan infrastructure bill, while it attempts to do this, I think it is very significantly flawed with how it goes about it.

The unintended consequence of the current text is it will ensnare people and companies and impose this transaction reporting requirement on those to whom it shouldn't apply and, in some cases, people who couldn't even possibly comply.

For example, the underlying text of this bill would impose this kind of

transaction reporting requirement on crypto transaction validators. These are the people who are building out the block chain by validating a transaction. They would be obligated to report things like a name and a tax ID number associated with the dollar amount. They don't have that information. For them, the transaction is just an anonymized number. It doesn't make any sense at all.

Also, people who write software code and then have no further involvement in any transactions, I think they would be captured by this language in the underlying bill. Certainly, that doesn't make any sense. It would apply to anybody who is providing a service that effectuates these transactions.

Think about the parallel in the ordinary securities brokerage business. Think about Merrill Lynch. We require Merrill Lynch to report the information about me if I give them my money to buy stock. That makes sense. But we don't require the electric company that provides electrical service to Merrill Lynch to make any such reporting because that would not make sense.

What happened was a group of us came together to clarify the rules of who are the actual brokers of cryptocurrency who should be responsible for the transaction reporting requirement.

We are not proposing anything that is the least bit sweeping or radical. Our solution just makes clear that a broker means only those persons who conduct transactions on exchanges where customers are buying and selling and trading digital assets.

We make sure that the bill does not sweep in software developers. It does not sweep in crypto transaction validators, regardless of which of the various methods they use for the validation. It doesn't sweep in node operators or any other nonbrokers. But anyone who owes any tax from a cryptocurrency transaction should pay their tax obligation.

So if you are actually a crypto broker, you would be required to turn over that information under our approach. Our amendment would do that. But it is important that the reporting requirement only applies to those kinds of intermediaries.

I don't think any one of our cosponsors thinks our solution is absolutely perfect, but it is a big improvement over the underlying text.

I would also point out that this space is changing. It is changing fast. A year from now, people will have come up with innovations and applications that we can't even imagine that probably nobody has even thought of yet. What I don't want to do is impose a burden that is going to stifle that kind of innovation.

What we shouldn't do is have an overly broad mandate or reporting requirement on people who can't even comply. We shouldn't favor or punish any particular methodology or platform design or validation mechanism.

And we shouldn't—we shouldn't—stifle innovation.

There is time to do this. There is an agreement. It is bipartisan. The White House is on board. We can get this done. We can do it right now.

I am going to yield to my colleague from Wyoming before making a unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Ms. LUMMIS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join with my colleagues in urging the Senate to allow this widely supported bipartisan amendment to move forward.

I want to thank Ranking Member TOOMEY, Senator WARNER, Senator PORTMAN, Senator SINEMA, and Chairman WYDEN. Chairman WYDEN, in particular, thank you for your early commitment to me to get this right and for your partnership.

The amendment before us specifies that persons who validate distributed ledger data, including digital asset miners and stakers, and those who provide hardware and software wallets, are not required to report customer information to the Internal Revenue Service. This is essential because those persons would not have access to the customer information necessary to comply with this requirement anyway.

Equally important in this amendment are clarifications to the definition of "broker" that will ensure that software protocol developers will not be swept up in IRS reporting requirements. Developers are the lifeblood of innovation and subjecting them to reporting would have far-reaching implications on privacy and on the evolution of technology in this country, not to mention that most developers would not have access to useful data.

This bill is very likely going to become law, and it is important that these changes become law along with the bill. That is why I urge my colleagues not to let the perfect be the enemy of the good.

I recognize there is dissatisfaction on both sides of the aisle with the lack of opportunity to offer amendments and to expedite debate.

However, I ask you to weigh those concerns against the importance of providing millions of Americans with additional clarity on the scope of their coming obligations to the IRS.

America is a country of innovation. Right now, our financial system is evolving before our eyes in much the same way that the internet first began to find a foothold in the mid-1990s. Distributed ledgers, digital assets, and other forms of financial technology are in the early stages of transforming the way we share and store value.

This amendment has started the debate on many difficult questions related to financial technology that the Senate must address over the next few years. We are reacting to what was put before us. I wish that we were implementing from the get-go, but that is not where we find ourselves today. So

let's get this broker definition as good as possible now and then move forward this fall with other definitions that will be important to producing a regulatory sandbox for digital assets that allows innovators to keep innovating.

We are in a difficult space right now. We are transitioning from the industrial economy to technology, and it is a bumpy ride. It is disruptive for all of us, especially those of us who grew up at the end of the industrial age and are so new to this technology age. But we can adapt, we can be helpful, and we can help forge a very reasonable place for the innovators to work from.

There is a proverb that says: "A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step."

This amendment is the very first step in a long journey, and we are all going to take it together. This journey is about America renewing its commitment to innovation and retaining its role as the leader in the global economy for future generations.

I look forward to working with each of you to make sure we get there, and I promise to be a partner to anyone willing to listen and learn.

I urge my colleagues not to object and to allow this amendment to proceed to adoption.

I yield back to the Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. TOOMEY.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Wyoming for her very constructive leadership in this area, and I yield at this time to the Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. I just want to say briefly to my colleague from Wyoming and my colleague from Pennsylvania, and also to our other colleagues who worked with us over the past week or so to come up with a good approach to this issue that is vexing, that we need to figure out how to get this into the legislation. So I support the amendment, of course.

I think there is a general consensus that information reporting is a good thing, and that particularly for our constituents, who are everyday holders of digital currency, they want to have that reporting in order to be able to pay their taxes properly.

The vast majority of them are good, hard-working taxpayers who just want to be able to get what their basis is or what their information is from a broker, just as they would for a stock or a bond.

So what we have done here through this language is ensure that, while doing that, we are not putting a sweeping provision in place that includes people who shouldn't be included.

As an example—and my colleague from Pennsylvania said it very, very well—we are not trying to bring in people who are involved in validating distributed ledger transactions through proof of work, commonly known as miners.

We are also not trying to bring in "proof of stake" validation or stakers, and we are also ensuring that we are

not bringing in people who are involved with hardware and software selling for digital wallets. They wouldn't be subject to these rules as well. And I think that was very important to make that clear. I think the language needed clarification.

So I am pleased with the amendment. I would hope that we would be able to get it passed because I think it is very important to have it as part of this legislation, and I want to thank, again, my colleagues, from Pennsylvania, from Wyoming, as well as Senators WARNER, SINEMA, OSSOFF, WYDEN, and others who have worked with us in this process, and thank you for bringing this amendment to the floor today.

Mr. TOOMEY. I thank the Senator from Ohio for his very constructive cooperation on this, and let me yield to our colleague from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Thank you. I want to thank the good efforts of the Senators who have led the work in finding a compromise in this regard, particularly Senator TOOMEY and Senator LUMMIS, who have worked very, very hard on this issue.

You know, Bismarck said many years ago that there are two things you don't want to see being made—sausage and legislation. And when it comes to particularly ugly legislation, this component—the regulation of cryptocurrency—may take the prize for the ugliest we have seen.

Moments from now, I expect that we are going to see objections to this compromise amendment that was negotiated. If we do in fact see objections and if the underlying language in this bill goes into effect, it will have devastating effects.

There is a new and exciting industry, in the United States, of cryptocurrency, whether Bitcoin or otherwise, that is generating jobs, entrepreneurs who are creating new values, new hedges against inflation, new opportunities, and it is fast moving. It is dynamic.

And this infrastructure bill—a bill being sold to the American people as "let's build some roads and bridges"—has one little portion in there designed to obliterate cryptocurrency.

Now, I fully understand that there are some bureaucrats at the Treasury Department that have never seen anything they don't want to regulate the life out of. But if the underlying language in this so-called infrastructure bill becomes law, we will be destroying billions of dollars' worth of industry in the United States. We will be destroying jobs in the United States—many of those jobs are in my home State of Texas—and we will be sending them overseas.

Listen. It isn't complicated. Cryptocurrency isn't tied to any particular piece of dirt. So the grand efforts of the U.S. Senate will be to say: We don't want those jobs in America. We don't want those resources in America. Go somewhere else.

The ugly truth, which Bismarck understood and which is particularly true

on cryptocurrency, is that there aren't five Senators in this body with any real understanding of how cryptocurrency operates. We have had no hearings on this. The Senate has had no hearings on this. The House, as far as I know, has had no hearings on this. And yet this body is prepared to obliterate an industry willy-nilly or, for that matter, the compromise—and, listen, the compromise that was put forward would be a meaningful improvement, would do much, much less damage, but even the compromise would essentially kick the can down the road and allow bureaucrats at Treasury to do massive damage. And the bureaucrats at Treasury don't understand this any better than does the U.S. Senate.

The right outcome, I think, is an amendment I introduced—strike the whole damn thing. If we want to legislate on this, actually do our jobs, be a deliberative body, hold hearings, listen to witnesses, understand the consequences, know what we are doing. That would be the reasonable, rational thing to do. Don't just put out a rule of massive taxes and regulations with no understanding of the consequences and jobs and real people who would be hurt.

For whatever reason, the Senate doesn't seem to want to behave reasonably or rationally, and I think the consequences are going to be longstanding of this foolish legislation.

I think Senator TOOMEY and Senator LUMMIS have worked hard on a compromise to brunt the worst aspects of this legislation, and so I hope the proposal they have put forward—or are about to put forward—is adopted. But if it is not, I am going to predict that every one of the 100 Senators here is going to come to regret that this body took a part in destroying jobs and a budding industry that will provide billions of dollars of new opportunity. And if the Senate keeps on this course, we are going to send it instead overseas to our competitors. That would be a tragic mistake.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding adoption of substitute amendment No. 2137, the Toomey-Warner-Lummis-Sinema-Portman amendment No. 2656 be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Reserving the right to object, I ask that the Senator from Pennsylvania modify his request to include my amendment No. 2535 dealing with defense infrastructure to this bill and that it be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Pennsylvania so modify?

Mr. TOOMEY. I do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there any objection to the request as modified?

Mr. SANDERS. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as I understand it, the Senator from Alabama is interested in increasing military spending by some \$50 billion.

You know, there is a headline in the New York Times today. It doesn't talk about the fact that the United States now spends more than the next 10 nations on the military. It doesn't talk about the fact that the Pentagon is the only major Agency of government that has not submitted successfully to an independent audit. It doesn't talk about the fact of huge profits among defense contractors.

What it does talk about is that a hotter future is now inevitable, a U.N. report says. Scientists urge immediate switch from fossil fuels to avert greater peril.

So I would say to my friend from Alabama, if we are going to invest \$50 billion, let us, in fact, invest in transforming our energy system so that we can save this planet for future generations and prevent the kind of unhealthy deterioration that we will inevitably see if we do not act.

So, Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding adoption of substitute amendment No. 2137, the Toomey amendment No. 2656 be considered and agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object again, I ask that the Senator modify his request to include my amendment No. 2535 and that it be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Delaware so amend?

Mr. CARPER. I do not.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request by the Senator from Delaware?

Mr. SHELBY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. So for people who have been watching this and aren't familiar with the bizarre practices in this body, I want to just explain briefly what just happened here.

Because there is a difference of opinion on whether or not the Senator from Alabama should get a vote on his amendment—because that is not agreed to—the body is refusing to take up an amendment that has broad bipartisan support that we all know fixes something that badly needs to be fixed. This isn't like a whim of the Senator from Pennsylvania. There is, like, no-

body who disputes that there is a problem here.

You want to know the specifics of the problem? According to the underlying bill, this is what is going to pass. This is what is going to get sent ultimately to the President's desk. It is a transaction reporting requirement, including name, taxpayer ID number, dollar amount, date. It is imposed on any person who, for consideration, is responsible for regularly providing any service effectuating transfers of digital assets on behalf of another person.

Well, look, I am not even a lawyer, but I can read. It sounds to me like any service effectuating transfers—that would include validators. I don't know how that doesn't include miners, stakers. It probably includes hardware and software wallets, software developers all across any kind of platform.

We are going to ask these people to provide information that they don't have and they can't get.

In what universe does that make any sense at all? All I want to do is have a vote on an amendment that fixes this in a way that has bipartisan agreement, in a way that constrains this to apply narrowly to the people who actually are the intermediaries running a centralized exchange, who have this information. But apparently we are not going to be able to do that. So we will be back on this because we are going to do a lot of damage. Who knows how much innovation we are going to stifle. Who knows exactly what kind of new apps will never emerge. It is hard to predict what kind of completely impossible mandate results in, but it is not good, and it is going to bring us back here having to try to clean up a mess which we could have prevented.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—AMENDMENT NO. 2466

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, unfortunately, we just saw the Senator from Vermont object to a compromise solution negotiated by Senator TOOMEY and Senator LUMMIS that would have mitigated some of the harm from the devastating new regulations on cryptocurrency in this so-called infrastructure bill. Because the Senator from Vermont raised that objection, the status quo right now is that these new regulations are going into effect, and billions of dollars of value are going to be destroyed.

Right now, today, about 106 million people are using cryptocurrencies around the world according to at least one recent report. The average annual income in the United States for a blockchain developer is \$136,000. That represents a steady career of good income for someone to own a home, to raise a family, to live a good and comfortable life. Texas is helping lead the way. Texas has taken the lead this past year as a major hub for cryptocurrency businesses and is even being hailed as the "cryptocurrency capital." But all of this is under threat.

Regulatory uncertainty is the No. 1 barrier to blockchain adoption according to 48 percent of respondents in a recent report, and they are right to be worried. The current bill widens the definition of "broker," those who would have to collect information on cryptocurrency consumers and report this information to the IRS. It would force every single participant in the cryptocurrency structure to operate as a financial institution, which would mean they would have to provide consumer information to the IRS even if they don't have access to that information. This overly broad definition of the word "broker" will block rapid innovation in cryptocurrency, and it will endanger the privacy of millions of Americans in cryptocurrency.

This is wrong, so I applaud my colleagues for trying to find an incremental approach. Unfortunately, because the Senator from Vermont objected, that incremental approach hasn't been adopted.

So let's exercise a brief shining moment of common sense, and let's recognize that if we gathered all 100 Senators in this Chamber and asked them to stand up and articulate two sentences defining what in the hell a cryptocurrency is, that you would not get greater than 5 who could answer that question.

Given that reality, the barest exercise of prudence would say we shouldn't regulate something we don't yet understand. We should actually take the time to try to understand it. We should hold some hearings. We should consider the consequences. We shouldn't destroy people's lives and livelihoods from complete ignorance.

My amendment is very simple. It doesn't add anything to this bill; it just strikes these provisions. It says: Look, let's not do this until we know what we are talking about. Let's be cautious. Let's be reasonable. Let's not be the No. 1 economic developer for the Communist Party of China by sending cryptocurrencies overseas to our competitors because we have made it impossible for them to succeed here.

Accordingly, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that notwithstanding adoption of substitute amendment No. 2137, that the Cruz Amendment No. 2466 be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Texas modify his request to include my amendment No. 2535 dealing with defense infrastructure in this country and that it be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator from Texas agree to so amend?

Mr. CRUZ. Reserving the right to modify my request, I would share with the Senator from Alabama that I have the deepest respect for the leadership of the Senator from Alabama, that I understand the Senator from Alabama

has a profound commitment for the fighting men and women of our military, as do I; that the Senator from Alabama's commitment to invest in our military and military infrastructure is laudable, and I fully support that commitment. Indeed, I would commit to the Senator from Alabama that I am more than ready and eager to partner with him to press through in this body, through any avenue that is available, investing sufficient funds in our military, in our soldiers and sailors and airmen and marines, and in the weaponry they need to defend this Nation.

But, sadly, we know in this context that our Democratic colleagues are going to object to funding for the military. They have decided that is not within their priorities. Even as they are spending trillions of dollars on everything else, defending this Nation is not a priority for the Democratic Members of this conference. So, if your amendment is added to my amendment, the effect will be what we just saw a moment ago, which is a Democratic Senator standing up and objecting and claiming the reason for objecting is they don't want to fund the military anymore.

I believe it is in the interest in this body to have a clean vote on, do we destroy cryptocurrencies, yes or no, without any other issues, because as much as I would like to join the Senator from Alabama in investing more in the military—and I am committed to working with him in doing so—I also don't believe we should be destroying jobs and millions of dollars of value in this country. Accordingly, I do not so modify my request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request of the Senator from Texas?

The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. SHELBY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Arizona.

H.R. 3684

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. President, I rise today as we approach a final Senate vote on historic legislation to invest in America's critical infrastructure, a bipartisan proposal that will make America stronger and safer, creating good-paying jobs, and expand economic opportunities across the country.

After months of negotiations, the Senate has now debated our bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for nearly 2 weeks in an open and legislative process. We considered 22 amendments from both sides of the aisle and voted to adopt many of those amendments. In the coming hours, the Senate will have the opportunity to approve legislation that meets the needs of everyday families, employers, and communities.

For decades, American infrastructure has been crumbling. For decades, American families have asked Congress for infrastructure investment. For decades, progress was blocked by partisan

disagreements. Now, as the Senate prepares for a final vote, what will this historic legislation actually mean for the people we serve?

Our bill will mean better roads by investing a historic \$110 billion to repair and upgrade our roadways, bridges, and other major transportation projects.

It will mean faster internet for people in more places by investing \$65 billion to deploy high-speed broadband and help families afford internet service.

It will mean cleaner, more reliable water sources by making the strongest investment in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in U.S. history, including water storage and recycling and drought contingency plans throughout Western States like Arizona.

It will mean fewer power outages and stronger, more reliable electricity grids by investing \$65 billion in power infrastructure.

It will mean better protections against wildfires by investing in fire suppression and recovery and the removal of hazardous fuels.

It will mean stronger water and sanitation systems and better broadband access in Tribal communities, as well as full funding for all currently authorized Indian water settlements. In Arizona, that includes the infrastructure for the Southern Arizona Indian water rights settlement with the Tohono O'odham Nation, completing the Gila River Indian Community water rights settlement, and funding the White Mountain Apache Tribe's water rights settlement.

Our legislation will mean safer, more convenient airports by investing \$25 billion to repair and upgrade terminals, runways, taxiways, and air traffic control towers.

It will mean the strongest investment ever in American public transit by expanding transit networks, improving accessibility, and funding the Nation's transit repair backlog of thousands of buses, railcars, stations, and thousands of miles of track, signals, and power systems.

It will mean the largest investment in clean energy transmission and electric vehicle infrastructure in U.S. history, electrifying thousands of school and transit buses, boosting critical materials supply chains, and building out a national network of electric vehicle charging stations.

We achieve all of these goals without raising taxes on everyday Americans.

Strong, reliable infrastructure represents more than pipes and pavement; it represents the opportunities for Americans to visit loved ones, for new businesses to open and compete globally, for veterans to access telemedicine, and for children to learn in safe and effective ways. That is why our legislation has earned the support of such a wide cross section of Americans. From the U.S. Chamber of Congress to the AFL-CIO, from agricultural producers to clean energy leaders, from

healthcare providers to transit advocates to local mayors, the list of experts and organizations that have endorsed our Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is long enough to take an entire speech just to list them all. But don't worry, I won't. Rarely does Federal legislation so directly address issues that matter to all our constituents, and rarer still does such historic legislation earn broad support in both parties.

How many times have we heard in recent months that bipartisanship isn't possible anymore?

We have been asked to accept a new standard by which important policy can only come together on a party line. And while Americans are more united than our politics would have you believe, we certainly face divisions. And, unfortunately, it is not commonplace—and by some, even expected—for elected leaders to feed those divisions on a daily basis with extreme and hyperbolic rhetoric, all-or-nothing policy demands, and toxic partisan attacks.

In Washington, palace intrigue and insider drama often steal the spotlight from important policy issues, but I promised Arizonans something different. I chose instead to follow the example of the late Senator John McCain, who, as the Arizona Republic recently recalled, refused to demonize the opposition party and worked to reach bipartisan agreements that tried to bring the country together.

This infrastructure effort is a perfect example of how I work to deliver results for Arizona. It is the easiest thing in the world for politicians to stay in their partisan corners, to line up on their respective sides of every partisan battle, and declare that bipartisanship is dead. But what is harder is getting out of our comfort zones and forming coalitions with unlikely allies that can achieve lasting results—lasting results—rather than temporary victories destined to be reversed, undermining the certainty that Americans depend on.

Ask just about any constituent in any of our States about our country's political divisions, and you will hear a desire from America's citizens for all of us to find ways to bridge our differences and work together to address the issues that actually matter to their daily lives.

Our bipartisan Senate group that negotiated this historic legislation and those we have partnered with to strengthen the bill throughout this process provide an example of how to achieve that goal.

In a demonstration of how the Senate was designed to work, the Senators in our group effectively represented the needs of the regions we represent: Senator CASSIDY in the Deep South and the gulf coast; Senator WARNER in the mid-Atlantic; Senator MANCHIN in Appalachia; and Senators ROMNEY and TESTER in the West. And with Senator PORTMAN representing the Midwest, the northeast and Alaska—each with

unique infrastructure needs—were ably represented by Senators SHAHEEN, COLLINS, and MURKOWSKI.

In what should not be a surprise to anyone, those women in our bipartisan group brought a no-drama work ethic, policy expertise, and a knowledge of our region's priorities that earned my designation of them as the "Wonder Women."

I sincerely thank my co-leader in partnering together on this effort, Senator ROB PORTMAN of Ohio, whose knowledge on issues ranging on permitting requirements to the Federal budget is matched only by his steadfast commitment to delivering on this priority for our country.

I am just not sure how we or our teams will manage daily schedules without the endless meetings, calls and Zooms, negotiating the nuances of formula funding and CBO scores. Actually, just kidding; we will manage just fine.

Our bipartisan group eventually grew to include more than 20 Senators, including my fellow home State Senator from Arizona, MARK KELLY. And a significant portion of our legislation is made up of the surface transportation reauthorization, which was painstakingly assembled in serious bipartisan committee negotiations led by Senators CARPER, CAPITO, CANTWELL, WICKER, BROWN, TOOMEY, and many others. Our proposal is a historic deal for communities across the country because of their hard work and expertise.

We have also worked very closely with U.S. House leaders and the Problem Solvers Caucus, whose support will be absolutely crucial as our legislation moves to the House. Through every step in these negotiations, President Biden and his team, as well as Majority Leader SCHUMER, stood firmly behind us, helping navigate the difficult challenges; and I am honored that we have also earned the support of Republican Leader MITCH MCCONNELL as well.

I would like to especially thank my legislative director, Michael Brownlie, for his hard work; and my entire policy team, who worked incredibly tirelessly over countless hours; along with our other Senate staff and President Biden's team at the White House, to help turn our negotiated framework into this legislation.

And what we have here today is what it looks like when elected leaders set aside their differences, shut out the noise and distractions, and just focus on forging common ground around our shared values. And this is what it looks like for elected leaders to ignore the extreme rhetoric and the cheap political attacks and put energy instead into delivering lasting results that matter to everyday Americans. This is what it looks like when elected leaders take a step toward healing our country's divisions, rather than feeding those very divisions.

And with those shared values in mind, I urge my colleagues in both parties to support the bipartisan Infra-

structure Investment and Jobs Act and help show the world that our democracy still works and that we still lead the world in innovation and competitiveness, and that Americans can be confident that their government is working for all of us and is indeed worthy of all of us.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to follow my friend and colleague, the Senator from Arizona. And while she is still on the floor, I want to thank her personally for her Herculean efforts that she has made throughout this process. It has not been easy. It has sometimes been challenging, and sometimes it takes somebody who just exudes optimism and enthusiasm and a deep-hearted, deep-seeded belief that what we are doing is good and it is right for all the right reasons.

We have acknowledged here on the floor, each and every one of us, this infrastructure bill is not the perfect bill. But I am waiting—I am waiting—for the day when we here in the U.S. Senate can come to a place where all 100 of us agree that we have the perfect bill.

But what we have for the Senate to consider is a product that is really built around core fundamentals and core principles that a group of Senators, equally divided, came together months ago to work through, knowing that the work was going to be hard.

This is probably one of the most consequential bills that I have been involved with in my Senate career, in the close to 19 years that I have been here. What we are presenting to the Senate is truly historic in its proportions. It is historic in its impact going forward. This is truly legacy infrastructure that we are speaking about.

Yesterday, it was a little frustrating. We have had some frustrating days where colleagues were sitting and waiting, hoping for things to move more rapidly than they were, and that is challenging. We have a process here in the Senate that is hard for those on the outside to understand and oftentimes hard for us on the inside to understand, but it is a process that, after a period of time, yields the results.

So as I was visiting with fellow Senators, I overheard somebody say: I am not really sure how we got here. How did we get to this point?

Well, I tell you, it wasn't magic. It wasn't magic that produced a legislative package that, again, is historic in its funding for roads, rails, bridges, ports, ferries, and waterways. It was certainly not an accident that negotiated this 2,700-page document that works to meet the broadband needs of Americans, particularly in unserved or underserved parts of the country, like my State in Alaska.

It also wasn't inevitable that this infrastructure deal would come together, and yet that is all following what we have learned in this past year and a half dealing with the COVID pandemic

and the reality that we have true disparities when it comes to basic infrastructure, like clean water, sanitation facilities, and energy. It was not inevitable that this infrastructure deal would come together.

In an age of cynicism and punditry, we kind of grow accustomed around here to believing that it is hard to get good things done in Washington, DC, and that is not good for any of us. Those of us here in the Senate, we signed up to do a job. We were sent here to do a job. We were sent here to work, and that is it. That is how we came to be where we are: through work, through hard work, and through compromise. So it wasn't magic; it wasn't accidental; it wasn't inevitable. We went to work.

And for a time, I think we really banished the demon of faction that casts his scepter all too often. Alexander Hamilton warned us of this polarizing temptation. And as the champion of infrastructure—or they called it internal improvements in the days of the Founding Fathers—I am hoping that he is looking favorably on us today.

But, again, this has not been an easy road, this infrastructure project. Every morning—those of us who were involved in these negotiations—we would wake up not surprised to read in the paper or see on TV that something had happened outside our control that was designed to kill this package.

And every day, instead of taking in those headlines, we saw our constituents, we heard from them, and we heard from the people across this country urging us to continue—people like Carl Uchtyl, Mario Cordero, Chris Conner. They penned an op-ed in one of our Alaska newspapers, and they urged us to advance the bipartisan infrastructure framework because, for them, the emphasis on what it would do to build out our ports and our waterways were significant.

The emails and the phone calls that we received reminded us of the infrastructure and how important it is for industries, for the jobs, for Alaskans, for folks all over the country, for health, the future; and it reminded us that we have an opportunity to do something that actually matters in their lives and in their communities.

And the other thing that I heard is they wanted us to do it together. Figure it out, you guys. Work together. When you look at the survey data that is out there, it is pretty resounding. Several different polls show 87 percent of Americans overwhelmingly support fixing infrastructure. The list of organizations that support it, everyone from the Associated Wire Rope Fabricators to the Institute of Makers of Explosives, to the National Governors Association, to the Steel Manufacturers Association, the TechNet—this bipartisan infrastructure package proves that good things can happen in Washington, DC, but that it takes work.

It takes a majority of those of us in this Chamber deciding that it is better

to get some of what our constituents want rather than none of it. It is better to make progress and actually deliver results to your constituents rather than just delivering a message. We do a lot of messaging around here, and, as my friend, the Senator from West Virginia, reminds us, a message doesn't fix a pothole.

Now, I have been disappointed that we haven't been able to get some of the amendments that we have heard about today. We heard Senator SHELBY from Alabama talk about defense infrastructure. We have heard the Senator from Texas, Senator CORNYN, talk about flexibility to the States. We have heard the Senator from Pennsylvania, Senator TOOMEY, working with Senator WYDEN and Senator LUMMIS, on the cryptocurrency issue.

So, again, is this perfect?

No. But is it a process that has delivered us to a place where we are delivering results to the people who have sent us here.

I was on the floor late last week outlining many of the benefits that Alaskans will see from this measure, but I want to take a few more minutes this afternoon to highlight just a couple of more in perhaps some detail. Because, as I have mentioned, and everyone knows, part of the role or the view that I offered in our bipartisan working group was to make sure that the needs of rural Americans were met. And this bill addresses some of the greatest infrastructure needs that, again, we see in rural America, but also in urban and everyone in between, to connect them in ways that we haven't before.

Southeast Alaska, this is the region of the State that I grew up in. It is an island and archipelago. It is not possible to travel by road from one city in the southeastern part of the State to another, for the most part. Our capital is not accessible by road.

Our reality is that we either travel by airplane or we are traveling on the water. So a strong ferry system, the Alaska Marine Highway System, is absolutely essential to local economic development, to quality of life, to community well-being.

There are 35 different ports along the Alaska Marine Highway System. This spans an area of 35,000 miles.

I am only looking at my colleague from Delaware because we have been working on the ferry initiative, and he is proud of the ferry system that he has there. But I have a lot of water that I have to cover, and it makes it challenging. It makes it challenging. But it is no different than Delaware, in terms of the significance that these small ferries can offer to people as they are moving their families around, as they are moving the basketball team, as they are going to Costco in Juneau and then delivering them to Hoonah.

To those military who are PCSing, going outside of the State, they have to move their families and all their goods and the dogs and the trucks, and they have to get out of town. And they get out by way of the ferry.

It is easy to compare Alaska's ferry to an urban bus or subway system or other form of mass transit that receives operation support. But until now, because Alaska's communities are rural and not urban, our ferry system hasn't been eligible for any meaningful Federal support for its operations. There has been some Federal funding available through allocation formula or grant program to the ferry system for construction and maintenance, but now ferry operators will be able to use funding for construction, maintenance, repairs, and operations costs.

In so many parts of Alaska, the Marine Highway System is the only highway. It is the only highway. So it is truly an essential mode of transportation.

When you come from a State where over 80 percent of your communities are not connected by road, again, you figure it out. It is air. It is on the ocean. It is in the rivers. But, more often than not, our transportation is not roads.

So to make sure that we are addressing this essential sector of transportation, we included language that establishes a program for essential ferry service to support our rural communities. So through this program, the Department of Transportation will be able to provide funds to the States to provide for essential ferry service.

We are also looking forward, as we think about how our ferries move, how our schoolbuses move, how our vehicles move, and we know that this administration has moved very aggressively when it comes to EVs. There is language in this bill that helps to facilitate that.

But, again, when you are thinking about what is on the roads—electrification of our vehicles, our schoolbuses, or our city buses—let's not forget what I just referred to, and that is these, effectively, buses that are on the water. So what are we doing to electrify or to look to alternative fuels for our ferries?

This is not a new concept. In the Scandinavian countries, where, again, hydropower is in great abundance, as it is in southeast Alaska, an electric ferry system makes sense. So we are kind of pushing out on this to build out this notion, this concept, that we can reduce emissions with our ferries by using alternative fuels or onboard energy storage systems, other related charging infrastructure, again, to reduce our emissions or produce zero onboard emissions under normal operations.

So folks in Skagway and Haines are looking at this with great interest because they view that as a real opportunity. Diesel doesn't come cheap up there, and that is what moves these ferries around. These communities, Skagway, are powered by hydro. So let's pull this all together.

I have mentioned the potential for EV and low-emitting ferries, but I am reminded that the United States has

and will continue to be a leader in energy production. We certainly know that in my State. And we are going to need to continue being an energy superpower. As we are continuing to advance as a society, we are going to be using more energy, we are going to be using more electricity, and, yes, we are going to need to produce much of it in the good, old-fashioned way for a long time to come. But electricity is becoming increasingly important. It is vital to so many facets of modern life, and this bipartisan infrastructure package takes that electrified future into account.

So looking at the different ways that it enhances the broader energy system by investing in next-generation clean energy production, there are three examples that I will just cite that are pertinent to Alaska.

There is funding for advanced nuclear reactors, including "micro" reactors. You might not think about Alaska and nuclear or "micro," but it holds great promise for deployment in certain rural and remote areas.

We also provide for funding for hydropower and marine energy research. We have a great Hydrokinetic Energy Research Center at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

We provide for renewable energy projects, including geothermal. We have pioneered in this. In fact, we have the Secretary of Energy, who is going to be visiting the State shortly and who will have an opportunity to look specifically at low-temperature geothermal, as well as promising opportunities that we have in the Aleutians.

More energy production from more types of energy means greater resilience, greater affordability, greater access to reduced emissions. So let's consider the ways the bill directly impacts the electric grid and the power sector—three areas, again, that are pertinent to Alaska and to rural areas.

We have included a measure that I had introduced, the PROTECT Act, which authorizes funding to improve our cyber defenses in smaller communities. I think we recognize that we have a big focus on the bigger communities, but your utilities in your smaller communities still have to provide for that cyberprotection.

The bill also sets aside grants for small utilities, like we have in Alaska, to prevent outages, to enhance resilience, for hardening of the grid. This is going to help in preventing wildfires that can be caused by powerlines or other disruptive events. We are talking about weatherization, fire prevention systems, installing equipment underground, maintaining utility poles and powerlines.

We also provide support for rural and remote areas in many communities in the State for the modernization of generation, transmission, and distribution. So this is going to help the cost effectiveness. It is going to help with energy efficiency, microgrids, siting and upgrading, as we shift to cleaner sources of energy.

Again, I think it is important to recognize that we are working to not only address the transmission but distribution, generation, and what we are really looking to do is look toward the future—a future in which we will need more energy production, more electricity, more batteries, and a more secure grid.

And as we are doing this, as we are building this all out, I want to make sure that we do ensure that all Americans are included in this energy and infrastructure transition.

And I speak specifically now to our Alaska Indian, American Indian, and Native people around the country. This bill—this Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act—is really a historic achievement for all of us who are concerned with American Indian, Alaskan Native Tribes, and villages.

I am the vice chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, and I have worked hard to make sure that Indian Country's voices have been heard.

Let's look at the Indian Health Service. It has a vital sanitation construction program. We are talking about water and wastewater, things that most of us just take for granted. We provide \$3.5 billion in funding for American Indian, Alaska Native Tribes and villages to complete all—all—of the identified sanitation projects. These are projects that have been on the books for way, way too long.

I am reminded by my friend Val Davidson of the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. She testified before our Indian Affairs Committee about both the funding needed in Native communities and sanitation's really significant impact on health. She shared a story—her own personal story but also a statistic—that one in three infants in communities from her region without adequate sanitation are hospitalized in their first year simply because they lack basic water and sanitation services. And it is not just a visit to a hospital as an infant that is scary, but so many then develop long-term health problems, which are absolutely unacceptable.

Any infrastructure bill has to live up to our Federal Government's trust obligations to our Tribes. This is vital to allowing Tribes access to water for their health and for their livelihood. So within the bill, we provide \$2.5 billion to fund Indian water settlements.

Now, outside the legal world, most people know Indian water settlements by the term “water rights.” But the outstanding settlements include the Aamodt, the Crow, Navajo-Gallup, White Mountain Apache, Blackfeet Nation, Navajo Utah, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Arizona Water Settlement Act. So this funding is going to complete the balance of each and every one of these settlements.

We also provide \$250 million for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to help build and repair irrigation, power, and sanitation systems, because you have to be

able to move clean water from one place to another and keep it clean and be able to use it productively.

We provide grants for Native village firefighting training, resilient transportation infrastructure, a Native Youth Public Land Corps to restore and protect ecosystems, adaptation projects for climate change impacts, and funding for a new program to provide Indian Tribes grants to clean up orphan wells.

There is more included in this. There is a \$110 million “set aside” for Tribal bridge investments. There is the Tribal Transportation Program and eligibility for grants under advanced energy and battery manufacturing and recycling programs.

We are really looking to ensure that we are prioritizing infrastructure needs in Tribal areas.

I haven't mentioned broadband, but it is absolutely significant. We know that broadband deployment on Tribal lands has lagged far behind the rest of the Nation. So to address this, the bill includes an additional \$2 billion for Tribal broadband connectivity grants.

We have heard it on this floor by all of us, Republicans and Democrats, urban and rural. We know that broadband is vital to education, healthcare, economic development, self-governance. It applies absolutely across the board as we think of the needs in Indian Country.

I think we know that the Federal financing provisions, the dollars going forward, are significant. But we also know that it is not just about the funding. It is about making these programs work better. So we do things like requiring expedited environmental review for Tribal transportation safety projects. We streamline categorical exclusions by empowering the Tribes in relation to the Federal Government.

Within the middle mile grants, there is consultation with Tribes on a process to designate tribally unserved and underserved areas.

So there is so much that we have really focused on in ensuring that Alaska Natives, American Indians, and our Native people around the country are included in these many provisions as they relate to infrastructure, including grid infrastructure, resilience, and reliability.

So I have spoken for a while now on three specific areas that I have chosen to highlight: certainly, within marine transportation, the benefits that places like Alaska will see; the significance of energy production and what this infrastructure bill will provide there; and benefits to our Native peoples around the country.

I want to conclude my comments by ending with where I began, which is to acknowledge the efforts of so many who have really gotten us here today, not through a miracle, not through an accident, not through an inevitability but just through hard work.

I am very pleased to have been part of this group, really honored to work

with such hard-working people and their teams, led by Senator SINEMA, who just spoke, and Senator PORTMAN. Their leadership has been, in my view, really extraordinary. The work that they have put behind managing us all to this point deserves the recognition.

I also want to acknowledge the good work of the chairman and the ranking member on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator CARPER and Senator CAPITO, who really laid the base for so much of this bill. So to the G-10 and the broader G-22, all those who have contributed so much, I convey my thanks.

I also want to acknowledge colleagues on the other side of the Capitol here, those who are known as the Problem Solvers over there. They really have jumped in, rolled up their sleeves, and helped us in solving problems when it comes to this infrastructure package.

And I am looking forward to being able to move this legislation, this package, from this body tomorrow, to send it over to the House so that they can then pick up those efforts.

But I am pleased that we have come to this place, after a long process, after a tough process but one where we were really able to focus on common goals that we identified at the outset, and we really held true to; that we were going to be dealing with core infrastructure, core infrastructure.

We agreed that we were not going to impose new taxes. We agreed that we needed to ensure that the spending pay-fors were true and legitimate. We agreed that long-term spending on infrastructure needed to improve our Nation's efficiency, our productivity, our GDP, and our revenue and not increase inflation.

And we have achieved that. We set out these parameters, and we achieved it. But we did it with a lot of give and a lot of take.

So while the end product is not something that any one of us individually would have written, I am very proud to be able to support what we have worked to bring to this body, again, with the help and hard work and collaboration of so, so many Members.

I am disappointed that immediately after we advance this bill tomorrow, the infrastructure package, that we will turn to a wholly partisan exercise, one that, in my view, taxes and spends without limit, a wish list that really knows no limit.

But, for now, let's move to this infrastructure bill. Let's get it to the House. Let's do what people in Alaska, what people in Illinois, what people around the country have asked us to do, and that is to address our Nation's competitiveness, our Nation's efficiency, and our Nation's advantages by securing and ensuring that we are able to move, to connect, and to provide for our country's needs.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). The Senator from Ohio.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I rise to urge my colleagues to support the budget resolution immediately after the infrastructure vote tomorrow.

I particularly am glad to see the Presiding Officer in the Chair today. Earlier I spoke on this floor about the infrastructure bill and her efforts—Senator DUCKWORTH from Illinois, her efforts—to ensure disabled-access transit stops.

We still have far too many transit stops in this country in big cities like hers in Chicago and mine in Cleveland and Philadelphia and New York and all over that are not accessible, and that has got to be our mission.

I chair the Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee. Most people call it just the Banking Committee. In reality, it is the housing, banking, and transit committee. And that is our responsibility to move in the right direction, and we are moving there rapidly. And I thank Senator DUCKWORTH for her work on that.

I want to talk not long. I know that Senator CARDIN is awaiting and has been patient, and I believe that Senator INHOFE might be here too.

This week we have moved forward a bill to provide critical investments in transportation infrastructure. I am glad we are doing that. The next step is to address housing.

Nothing is more important than housing. As chair of the Banking and Housing Committee, I have held hearings about housing needs across the country. This committee, called Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs—most refer to it as “Senate Banking”—has been mostly about Wall Street in the past and not nearly enough about housing. Those issues are changing.

I know Senator CARDIN knows—and not just in Baltimore but in Western Maryland and everywhere, as in urban Ohio and rural Ohio—how important housing is. We hear repeatedly about the shortage of affordable housing, about wide disparities in access to home ownership.

This isn't just about a few coastal cities. We heard from mayors in Akron, OH; in Bozeman, MT, Senator TESTER's State; in Tempe, AZ, about their housing needs. Their markets vary. In Bozeman, home prices are up 50 percent. It is almost impossible for a young family to find a place to live. In Akron, home values are sometimes too low to find financing, and banks tell us they can't make a profit on selling a \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 mortgage on a \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 house.

Their issues are different, but all three mayors told us they need the Federal Government to be a better partner in helping to invest in their housing and in their communities. Without housing investment, there cannot be economic growth. That is because housing—by any real definition, housing is infrastructure.

Where you live determines so much about your life: where your kids go to

school, how far you have to go to work, what kind of jobs you get. It determines where you do your grocery shopping and whether you have access to fresh fruits and vegetables; whether your kids are exposed, as they are in far too many old neighborhoods—whether it is Appalachia, Southern Illinois, or whether in Ohio or whether it is Cleveland or Chicago—too often to hazardous lead or mold.

We saw over the past year that housing certainly affects our health. People's paychecks have not kept up with the cost of living, particularly the cost of rent.

Senator SANDERS, earlier today—and this was before the pandemic, what he was talking about, that 25 percent of American renters pay more than half their income in rent. One thing goes wrong in their lives—their car breaks down, their child gets sick, they miss 3 days of work because of a minor injury—and everything turns upside down for them. This is even more of a problem, of course, for Black and Latino renters, with little left over each month for food and medication, let alone saving.

It is not just renters. Today, more than one in five homeowners still pay more than one-third of their income in rent. And the Black ownership rate—this is pretty unbelievable. The Black ownership rate is as low as it was when, in 1968, this body finally passed open housing, finally passed fair housing.

The first Secretary of HUD, after we passed the fair housing law, was Senator ROMNEY's father, George Romney. As hard as he tried—partly because the President, his boss, followed a southern strategy—he did very little in the end, could accomplish very little for housing equality.

We are the wealthiest country in the world. We have half a million people, including 100,000 children, without a place to stay on a given night.

The budget resolution on the floor tomorrow will finally make the investment we need to help more families find and afford a place that they can call home. Think of the word “home.”

It helps us provide funding to make critical repairs to our Nation's public housing, to make it more sustainable, to save families money, to reduce harmful effects on our climate. It helps provide affordable places for families and seniors to rent, including in rural areas, and helps more families become first-time homeowners.

It will help communities invest in their neighborhoods, including Brown and Black communities who have been left out of our Nation's recovery. It will make their homes more resilient in the face of changing climate. Communities will have housing and transit investments that work together to bring down the cost of daily commutes, to reduce harmful effects on our climate.

With the resolution before us tomorrow, we have an opportunity to make

people's lives better and to give local economies the chance to grow. We can expand access to affordable rentals. We will make it easier to purchase a home. We will put tradespeople to work in good-paying, often union jobs, building housing and making it safer and making it resilient.

I urge my colleagues to support this long-overdue investment in our homes, in our communities, and in our workers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

WESTERN SAHARA

Mr. INHOFE. Madam President, I know we have all been talking about what is going to happen in the next 2 days, and it is very significant, the things that have to take place.

But I want to remind some people out there that it doesn't mean that everything else stops. We have a couple of issues that are major issues but not to really large numbers of people. But they are issues that are meaningful—very meaningful—to a few, and it happens that there has been progress in both of these.

Now, one of them is an issue that has to do with Western Sahara. And I know that a lot of people are not really familiar with that or what the issue is, but it is an old issue. It has been around since 1966. It is a very significant issue. It is one that you have heard me talk about for quite some time, but we have made some great progress.

First of all, it bears repeating because—they are called the Sahrawis. The Sahrawis are the people from Western Sahara, and they are kind of a voiceless people. That is why I am here—because nobody else is here on that.

So how we got here: As West Africa was being decolonized, Western Sahara was clear and declared an independent nation, despite Morocco attempting to claim it as a territory.

In 1966, the U.N. General Assembly resolution agreed that the referendum of self-determination should be held. That is the U.N. General Assembly. There was no disagreement at that time except from Morocco. Everyone was in agreement. In fact, at that time, Morocco was even in agreement. This is 1966. And we were going to have a determination in the form of a referendum that would be taking place in 1975. So it was 1966, planning for 1975.

Self-determination is just merely letting the Sahrawi people decide for themselves the imperative principle of action, the right to judge for themselves to be independent or to be a part of Morocco. Now, this was just the first promise of a referendum. To date, none has been kept.

The International Court of Justice opinion from 1975 also agreed that Morocco did not have any sovereignty over the land and that the referendum of self-determination should be held. So you have the International Court of

Justice agreeing with this, the U.N. General Assembly—all in agreement.

Morocco maintained its unlawful claim to Western Sahara and, after decolonization, attempted to annex the country with force. Western Sahara—officially the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic—through the Polisario, defended their rights to the land.

And after more than a decade of violence from Morocco, the United Nations finally intervened in 1991, and both sides agreed to a cease-fire and a path forward. That was 1991. It was called at that time the Settlement Plan. It solidified that Morocco and Western Sahara agreed to hold a referendum and a date for that referendum and created the United Nations Mission for the Referendum to solidify this.

If you are keeping track, that was the third promise. And it is worth noting that the U.N. regularly reaffirms the 1991 commitment to a referendum for self-determination.

Now, self-determination is something that people assume there is not opposition to. Self-determination is something that is very meaningful to us and our history in this country, and this is something that at that time was accepted.

I can remember talking several times in previous administrations, going back to the Reagan administration, and people were, at that time, knowing that this was going to happen but just didn't know for sure how it was going to happen or when it was going to happen. And here it is now decades later, and it hasn't happened yet.

The referendum for 1992 never took place, and the process stalled. The process stalled, although the cease-fire held. Morocco just wouldn't hold up its end of the bargain.

Former Secretary of State James Baker—I remember when the previous administration came in, James Baker had read someplace that I was concerned about this issue. This old issue had never been resolved, and he called me up, and he said: Well, I want you to know that I spent a lot of years with three different Presidents trying to get this done. We were unable to do it, but let me work with you.

This is one of these rare things where everyone agrees.

So, anyway, they had a special envoy to Western Sahara. Baker worked on multiple plans with Morocco and Western Sahara and came close many times, but it never happened.

Most notable is the Houston agreement was signed by Morocco and Western Sahara and recommitted to a referendum of self-determination plan for 1998. That would have been the fourth time. Morocco recognized they would likely lose a vote quickly and tanked all negotiations. The next year, by declaration, they would never accept a referendum that included independence as an outcome despite years of promise otherwise.

The conflict stalled then, leaving us in what is called a frozen conflict for

more than two decades. At the end of last year—November, to be precise—Morocco tried to violently crush a peaceful protest in the Gujarat area. The Western Saharans were peacefully protesting Morocco's direct violation of the United Nations' cease-fire agreement by using the road in this direction.

The international community did nothing. Then truly the worst thing happened. There was a change in policy of the United States that had been a policy for some three decades where they actually were recognizing Morocco's sovereignty. That decision was wrong. It reversed decades of U.S. policy. But the policy held until 1966. It was a shocking announcement and deeply disturbing to all who valued individual rights and self-determination.

That is why earlier this year Senator LEAHY and I led 25 of our colleagues in a bipartisan letter to President Biden urging him to reverse the harmful policy and to recommit to a policy of self-determination. This is something that I know that he recognizes. I actually personally talked to him about this in his first week in office. It hasn't been done yet, and it should be done. Many of our colleagues and I are not alone in our push for Western Sahara to have the right for self-determination. So does the African Union, which is comprised of 55 member states. We have most of the European community who supports the U.N. efforts on our side. The European Court of Justice also ruled that Western Sahara is not a part of Morocco, and the EU and the economic agreements can cover Western Sahara.

So, anyway, this has happened over and over again for a long period of time. Just fairly recently, Sultana Khaya had a CNN—I am actually going to wind this up with an agreement with my friend from Maryland—this is the statement that she made. She said:

Morocco's repression of the Sahrawi people, and Sahrawi human rights defenders in particular, is well documented. The Sahrawis have struggled under Moroccan occupation since 1975, and this repression will continue until the occupation is ended. And while the United Nations Security Council supports giving the people of Western Sahara the chance to determine their own future through a referendum, Morocco has refused to allow the referendum to take place, depriving us of the chance . . . [for] self-determination.

She concluded by saying:

I cannot find the words to describe the endless suffering that I personally, and the Sahrawi people more generally, have endured under this violent occupation.

They are resolute, and we should be too.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From CNN, July 29, 2021]

I'VE BEEN RAPED, BEATEN AND HELD UNDER HOUSE ARREST FOR FIGHTING FOR MY SAHRAWI PEOPLE

(Opinion by Sultana Sidibrahim Khaya)

Earlier this month, the Biden administration reaffirmed the United States' recogni-

tion of Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara, a disputed region on the northwest coast of Africa. The United Nations calls Western Sahara a "non-self-governing territory"; I call it home. My home is under occupation and my people, the Sahrawis, are under attack, and the US position on Western Sahara legitimizes this occupation and will be used as license for further attacks. I know this because I have lived it.

As an outspoken advocate for self-determination in Western Sahara, I have long been a target for the occupying Moroccan government. I have been beaten, tortured, and abducted by Moroccan police while engaged in peaceful protests; after a particularly violent assault in 2007, I lost my right eye.

Because I refuse to be silenced, Morocco stepped up its efforts against me late last year. On November 19, while driving to my home in Boujdour, I was stopped at a police and military checkpoint. The authorities forced me into a police car and took me to a nearby police station, where I was interrogated, sexually assaulted, and told to go home and not to speak to anyone. I arrived home soon thereafter to find it surrounded by 21 police vehicles and numerous officers, who physically pushed me into the house. I have been forcibly confined to the house ever since. My *de facto* house arrest, which is now in its ninth month, has absolutely no legal basis—I have never been shown a court order authorizing my detention or informed of any criminal charges against me.

The Moroccan government has told Amnesty International that I'm not under house arrest and denied a statement by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders that included details of the assaults, saying that the rapporteur's statement "interferes with the ongoing debates in the framework of the 47th Session of the Human Rights Council" and "do not fit at all with the framework of dialogue and mutual respect" it expected at the UN. Meanwhile, the occupying Moroccan forces appear determined to not just detain me unlawfully, but to harass, torture, and perhaps even kill me.

Moroccan police, military, and other security agents maintain a constant presence outside the house and prevent anyone from leaving or coming in, even to bring food. They cut the electricity in mid-April. Police throw a toxic, foulsmelling liquid into the house on a near-daily basis, making it difficult to breathe. They frequently (and explicitly) threaten to kill me.

Moroccan authorities have also repeatedly raided the home and brutally assaulted me, my sister, my brother, and my mother. In May, during one such raid, Moroccan agents raped my sister and I—in a barbaric message, they penetrated my sister using the broomstick that we use to wave the Western Sahara flag. Despite all this, I continue to wave the Western Sahara flag from my rooftop every day—an act of resistance that may end up costing me my life.

Unfortunately, my story is just one of many. Morocco's repression of the Sahrawi people, and Sahrawi human rights defenders in particular, is well documented. The Sahrawis have struggled under Moroccan occupation since 1975, and as recently as July 1, the State Department reiterated that there is no change in the administration's policy. The Biden administration has claimed that human rights are central to its foreign policy—this is difficult to believe while it sides with Morocco in its occupation of Western Sahara and its repression of the Sahrawi people.

Second, as part of its reengagement with the United Nations Human Rights Council, the US should press forcefully for a referendum on self-determination in Western

Sahara. The U.N. General Assembly reaffirmed the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara as far back as 1966, when it was still referred to as “Spanish Sahara,” and the U.N. Security Council unanimously established a mission to coordinate a referendum on self-determination for the people of Western Sahara in 1991.

The US, for its part, has consistently voted in favor of Security Council resolutions seeking a referendum on self-determination. Since President Biden has advocated for a return to a rule-based international order, the US should take the lead to ensure that the long-promised referendum is finally held and the results are honored.

And third, the U.S. should make the protection of human rights in occupied Western Sahara and self-determination for the Sahrawi people key issues in its bilateral relationship with Morocco. For example, the readout from a recent call between US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita shows that while Blinken encouraged Morocco to reaffirm its commitment to human rights, the readout omitted any mention of Western Sahara or the right of its people to self-determination.

For any productive change to occur, Morocco needs to know that its powerful allies care about both.

I cannot find the words to describe the endless suffering that I personally, and the Sahrawi people more generally, have endured under this violent occupation. But we remain strong, our will unshaken, and we will persevere with our peaceful resistance.

Mr. INHOFE. With this, I would like to offer my friend, since he has been waiting for a long period of time, to use the remainder of my time if he will then yield the floor to me at the conclusion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I thank my friend from Oklahoma. The two of us arrived in the House of Representatives on the same day. We have been friends for all this period of time. I thank him for his generosity.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Madam President, I take this time to talk about legislation we will be considering tomorrow, which will be the budget resolution. It gives us a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

I would just like to pause for a moment because it is part of President Biden's Build Back Better, that we can have a more competitive nation, and we can create the jobs that we need for the future.

I was with Secretary Blinken earlier today in College Park, and he talked specifically about the challenges our Nation faces. We go back a generation ago, and America was clearly in the forefront of creating jobs, of taking advantage of all innovation and new, emerging fields. We were the envy of the world. Today, the rest of the world has caught up and in some cases, exceeds us.

This once-in-a-generation opportunity to build back better gives us an opportunity to do what we need to do for America's future and to show the world that our free market, democratic society is the best way to take care of its people.

This is an incredibly important part to deliver on President Biden's Build Back Better. We already did with the American Rescue Plan. That gave us the opportunity to get the COVID-19 vaccines distributed so we can get that behind us. It helped our State and local governments. It took half of our children out of poverty. In Maryland, 52,000 Maryland children were taken out of poverty. Forty million families nationwide benefited from the child credit and the earned income tax credit. We took a major step forward in building back better with the passage of the American Rescue Plan.

Tomorrow, with the passage of this bipartisan infrastructure package, we will take the second step in building back better, and there is a lot to be celebrated in the legislation that we will pass tomorrow.

I was proud to work on the transportation and water infrastructure issues, along with my colleague who is presiding, to make sure that we provided the building blocks necessary for modern infrastructure—for transportation, for roads, bridges, transit systems, and our water infrastructure, which is critically important.

We will take a second step to build back better with the passage of the bipartisan bill, but there is a third step that is critically important, and that is the budget resolution we will be taking up starting tomorrow.

The budget resolution takes us beyond COVID-19. Yes, we have to rebuild from COVID-19, but we also need to rebuild our Nation, make it modern and provide the needs that Americans need. The budget resolution will provide America more competitiveness, better prepared for the future, create jobs, millions of jobs, and lower the cost for Americans in dealing with their everyday needs. We are asking the wealthier people to pay their fair share—first of all, to pay their taxes, and then pay their fair share of taxes. We tackle the climate crisis, and we develop the workforce to meet the jobs of the future.

So I am very excited about the opportunity of taking up the budget resolution. Let me just comment on a few specifics as chair of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee. I expect we will be given budget instructions to deal with those issues.

Madam President, you are part of that group. We need to look at access to credit, investment, and markets, particularly in underserved communities, those that have not had the opportunities in the past. I am talking about women-owned small businesses, minority-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses, and entrepreneurs from other underserved communities.

We are going to take a look at government contracting. The United States is the largest purveyor of goods and services of the world. How can we improve that in building back better to make

sure all are included in that opportunity?

We are going to look at innovation and growth. Small businesses are the innovator of our economy. They create a better way to do things. We saw that during COVID-19. We get more innovation from small businesses than from the larger companies. But as we look at emerging markets, there has been a real separation between the underserved communities not being able to participate in new, emerging markets.

When you take a look at the amount of venture capital that goes to minority small businesses or women-owned small businesses, it is a small fraction of their demographic numbers. The last time I checked, White men controlled 93 percent of all venture capital funding. Now, I am all for everyone participating, but that is not a fair division and opportunity for emerging markets.

So we need to take a look at emerging markets, incubator and accelerator programs, and then access to capital. We need direct help through the Small Business Administration to help small businesses because we know we have a better chance for the underserved community to get a fair shake with the SBA controlling the loans. We also need to have partnerships with the private sector, as we have seen in programs like the SBIC Program and other programs.

So we are going to work as a committee to try to deal with the needs particularly of those small businesses that have been left behind in the past.

I also serve on the Environment of Public Works Committee and chair the Subcommittee on Infrastructure, working with the Presiding Officer. I mention this because both of us have been directly involved in creating new programs to help underserved communities.

There is a program that I was involved with that deals with water affordability, a pilot program that will allow those who cannot afford their clean water bills help from government, as we do for utility costs. That was included in the bipartisan package but not the funding. I am hoping that we will have the opportunity to fund that program and to fund other programs that we deal with in underserved communities, the water projects; that we will be able to deal with that in the Environment and Public Works Committee in the budget resolution.

We are going to deal with climate, and we need to deal with climate. Investments in jobs and growth and dealing with the environment go together, and we are finding that America is not as far ahead internationally as other countries, such as China, investing a lot more in electric convention than America is investing in electric vehicles.

We are going to work with the Environment and Public Works Committee, the Agriculture Committee, and the Commerce Committee to deal with coastal resiliency, which is critically

important to my State. The Chesapeake Bay—the iconic symbol of Maryland in our region, the largest estuary in our hemisphere—it has challenges. This once-in-a-generation opportunity gives us the opportunity to do things that are going to be beneficial for our environment and help us deal with climate change; for example, the beneficial use of dredge material. We want to keep our channels dredged for commerce. It is very important. Where do we put that material? Well, in the Chesapeake Bay, we want to put it into restoring wetlands, creating new wetlands, which will help our environmental issues as well. In agriculture, we are going to look at land conservation programs, all that are important.

I was pleased to see that in the explanation of the budget resolution, there is a specific reference to the Appalachian Regional Commission. It is very important to two western counties in Maryland, and we need to do more to help them and their economy and to grow back better, and we are going to have an opportunity in the budget resolution to do exactly that.

As I mentioned earlier, lower costs for Americans—childcare. We need to bring down the cost so Americans can afford childcare.

There is extension of the child tax credit, the earned income tax credit, because we want to make sure that the progress we have made in lifting families out of poverty—that we do that on a permanent basis. Let's get that longer period of time providing that relief.

Help for high education—the cost of higher education is way out of line here in America. This bill will give us a chance to deal with the cost of higher education, community colleges, HBCUs, Pell Grant increases.

I was listening to Senator BROWN talk about affordable housing and home ownership. I was with Secretary Fudge this week in Prince George's County, MD, and we talked about tools that are available to help with affordable housing and home ownership so families can afford a home today.

I am proud to cosponsor a bill with Senator PORTMAN, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Act, so that communities can do the investment in their community, and where there is a difference between market rate and the cost to do the renovation or building, we have a credit so that communities can have the type of housing commensurate with their needs.

We can do a lot more. Paid family medical leave—we are one of the only countries that don't have that. There is an opportunity in the budget resolution for us to be able to accomplish that.

Expansion of Medicare: I have been trying to get Medicare to cover dental care for a long time. Seniors need that type of protection. We have a chance to do that in this budget resolution, along with eyeglasses and hearing aids, which should be—they are essential.

They should be included in Medicare. We have a chance to do that.

Then on the climate issue, we are going to have an opportunity to really deal with one of the greatest threats we have, and that is our planet is burning up. We know that. We need to take dramatic action in order to deal with the realities of climate change. We see it all around us. We see it in flooding in Maryland, wildfires out West, in flooding—lands disappearing in our community and around the world.

We will have a chance with electric vehicles and transportation and research. We will have a chance with the Tax Code to reduce carbon emissions. We will have a chance in public buildings to build green buildings and energy efficiency. We will have an opportunity for weatherization programs. All that is contemplated in the budget resolution.

I can't give specifics because that is what committees will be doing in the next several weeks, coming up with specifics to fill in. But to make this once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring down the cost to Americans, to deal with climate change, to deal with job creation and preparedness and job training—this is a responsible package that will help working families and have the wealthy who are not paying their taxes today to pay their taxes and pay their fair share of taxes.

Winston Churchill remarked:

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

I agree with Sir Winston Churchill. Together, we can meet the most formidable challenges our Nation faces, and the Build Back Better budget is the next step in that process, and I look forward to our taking this resolution up, moving it forward, and then letting our committees get back to work and fill in the blanks and get this done in order that Americans can meet the challenges of the future, create the jobs we need in the future, and get the cost reliefs that they need to deal with life essential needs.

I thank my friend from Oklahoma for allowing me to give my remarks.

I yield the floor.

Mr. INHOFE. I thank my friend. We worked on a lot of bills—infrastructure—together since we were both elected the same year many years ago and we accomplished a lot together.

What I want to do is complete my remarks that I began a few minutes ago.

Before I do, Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that during the course of the remarks I made concerning Western Sahara, that the speech that was made by Sultana Khaya, that was published in CNN, be printed in the RECORD during the course of my presentation.

LIGADO

Madam President, let me repeat what I said in the beginning of my previous remarks, and that is we are all talking about the same thing right now. We are now getting down to the last—conceiv-

ably, the last two votes that we are going to be having, so all of the concentration has been on those.

But I want to mention two of the other issues that were made very popular issues and they are making great progress right now. Let me go ahead and do that for a short while, and that is to provide an update on the Ligado issue—the Ligado issue.

Friday was inauguration day of a thing called the Space Beat Memo. It is a new weekly newsletter from POLITICO designed to focus on space and satellites. This is their inaugural, first-ever newsletter with a great rundown on—they chose the Ligado issue.

Just to remind everyone what we are talking about—Ligado, L-I-G-A-D-O—the Ligado Order was a spectrum sale approved back in April of 2020, that would let Ligado use the L-band or the spectrum—that is the spectrum close to the GPS for commercial use.

Why is that a problem?

It is a problem because Ligado's signals are about 2 billion times as powerful as GPS signals, so they would cause interference, according to all unbiased sources, to the GPS.

Here is one way to put the interference into perspective: Because GPS signals travel from satellites in space, by the time those signals get to the Earth's surface, they are low power. Because the FCC order allowed Ligado to repurpose spectrum to operate in a terrestrial-based network, Ligado signals on Earth's surface will be much more powerful than GPS, causing substantial harm and interference.

Now, we know that basically everyone in government opposes this. We talked about this now since the last time—just June 23, down here on the floor. Shortly after the Ligado Order was announced in April of 2020, the NTIA filed a petition to reconsider—basically, a petition asking them to reconsider their decision again, given the negative impact it would have. This was signed on behalf of some 15 governmental Agencies.

The NTIA is the National Telecommunications Information Administration. They are an Agency within the Department of Commerce that serves as the President's primary adviser on telecom policies.

As I announced on June 23, I recently received a letter from Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo confirming that—and I'm quoting now—"there has been no change to the Department of Commerce's or NTIA's opposition to the FCC's Ligado Order."

That is a direct quote. That is the new administration. We know the last administration believed the same thing, and this administration is following on this cause. It is a very significant one.

She also pledged that NTIA will continue to pursue the petition for reconsideration. The petition represents the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Interior, Justice, Homeland Security, Energy, Transportation, NASA, FAA,

and more. This is primarily the entire government. This is huge.

It showed, once again, that there is a bipartisan opposition to the Ligado Order that is continuing into the Biden administration.

But that is not all I am doing. I am also introducing the RETAIN GPS Act, which would ensure Federal Agencies, State governments, and all others negatively impacted—all that were negatively impacted by Ligado's activities—by the actions of a private actor are not left holding the bag when the costs start coming in and, worse, are not put in a position where they have to push the costs onto the American consumers.

The House has introduced legislation as well, led by Representatives COOPER, MIKE TURNER, FRANK LUCAS, and others. It is just common sense and only fair.

As David Grossman, the Executive Director of GPS Innovation Alliance, said to POLITICO:

The RETAIN Act—

Talking about the act that I have introduced—

is just extending those protections that the FCC recognized were critical for Federal Agency GPS systems on the civil side.

In other words, if we are going to protect government, protect individuals, too, if it is done through the negative operations of Ligado.

The GPS Innovation Alliance is just 1 of more than 100 we are talking about. This is a large number of people, companies, and industry groups who support my RETAIN GPS Act.

Why is it so popular?

Because GPS is essential to everything we do. You know, people thought—when this thing first came on, they were just concerned about the air industry, the airlines, and others; but these are some of the day-to-day things. I don't really have to read this, but I think it is important that people know it is important to others and themselves.

I don't know anyone who isn't really concerned about GPS and its safety and working ability. A big one is using your credit or debit card. Every time you use a credit or debit card, when you are making a purchase or using an ATM, our financial systems rely on GPS timing to work.

Another: Making a phone call. Cell phone networks rely on GPS to synchronize cell towers so calls can be passed seamlessly. If they experience interference, your call can drop when moving from tower to tower.

Here is one people don't expect, and that is energy, whether that is filling up your tank at the pump or managing electrical grids to light our homes. We rely on GPS timing to safely operate underground pipelines and our electricity grid.

Farmers and ranchers, we don't think about them as being involved in this. But in this day and age, when they are planting crops, when they are applying fertilizer, and during harvest

operations, moving large and critical machinery with precision, they depend on GPS working to do it.

Working out. All these healthy people doing what they are supposed to be doing—and I am not doing—and that is running and keeping in good health. Twenty percent of them use a fitness tracker or smartwatch, the majority of which use GPS to count steps and track distances.

Taking a flight. Commercial and civil aviation relies on GPS to navigate safely.

Just driving around. Each day, countless Americans rely on Google Maps, Waze, Apple Maps, and other navigation systems to get them from point A to point B.

And while no one hopes that there could be any kind of a problem in terms of a fire, an ambulance, or an injury—the 9/11 operators and EMS used GPS and satellite communications to locate a caller and navigate as quickly as possible. We had a group coming in, documenting cases of lives that have been saved.

And there is more: Weather forecasting, the movement of goods on our highways, and the rest. It goes on and on.

That is why everyone agrees we need to protect GPS usage from being damaged by the Ligado Order.

Who is on the other side?

Just Ligado and the people who they pay to support them. That is a whole lot of lobbying firms. The POLITICO article highlighted that they are staffing up their lobbying and public relations:

So far this year the Virginia company has enlisted a powerful roster of lobbying firms . . . currently numbering some 15.

And on the side of GPS and satellite communications are Members of the House and the Senate, 15 Federal Agencies, over 100 companies and organizations. The other, Ligado, is really just a lobbying group.

I will just leave with one reminder. We know that the Ligado Order will damage GPS. The FCC said as much when they approved the order. The FCC said:

Ligado shall expeditiously repair or replace as needed any U.S. Government GPS devices that experience or are likely to experience harmful interference from Ligado's operations.

But if Ligado believes that their press states that they won't cause interference to GPS, then why should they be afraid of my RETAIN Act?

While they ponder that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The Senator from Hawaii.

H.R. 3684

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, you know, this is a very important week in the United States Senate. Our infrastructure bill is big, it is bold, and it is bipartisan, and it reflects the needs of a population especially important to me—Native communities and Indian Country across the United States.

As chair of the Indian Affairs Committee, I have made it my mission to support these communities. This legislation contains more than \$11 billion in direct investments for Native communities, including \$3.5 billion for clean water access and delivery, \$3 billion for safe roads and bridges, and \$2 billion to close the digital divide for American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian families. This bill will have a direct and long-lasting impact, and I am proud to support it.

Since taking the committee gavel, I have worked with President Biden, with the Presiding Officer, with the members of the committee, and my colleagues in both Chambers to ensure that Native voices are always at the table.

Our Tribal provisions in the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act were the two largest investments in Native communities in American history—the two largest investments in Native communities in American history. Both bills contained resources and policy reforms that were long awaited and desperately needed, and they are already paying dividends.

But our work has to continue, and this historic budget resolution is the next step. At its core, our budget is about restoring the middle class and giving more Americans the opportunity to get into the middle class.

It cuts taxes for millions of American families. It creates millions of American jobs while tackling the climate crisis, and it is paid for by the wealthy paying their fair share. No one who makes under \$400,000 will see an increase in their taxes.

I used to hate charts. I used to not be a chart guy. I have a rule in my office: If you are coming in to present to me, no PowerPoints. I just don't like charts.

But I am making an exception right now because it is really important that the public understand what we are about to do.

We are going to lower costs for all Americans. We are going to cut taxes for American families. We are going to create millions of jobs while tackling the climate crisis. And it is going to be paid for by requiring the wealthy to pay their fair share in taxes.

The budget also addresses Native communities specifically. For far too long, historical underfunding of Federal programs serving Native communities and Tribes has left them vulnerable. Today, one in three Native Americans lives in poverty, and just 19 percent of Native American students are attending college. Native Americans have a life expectancy 5½ years lower than the general population, and Native Americans are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

This budget reverses these systemic injustices through a \$20.5 billion targeted investment. The budget makes significant investments in climate resiliency for Native communities and

gives them the tools that they need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, deploy their own clean energy solutions on their own terms, and restore and protect their homelands.

It ensures that Native students and families have more access to Native language programs, early childhood education, and college. It also includes historic investments in health and education programs to provide much needed support to Native people across the country.

We have already made the biggest investment in Native communities in American history, and we are not done yet. The responsibility of the U.S. Government to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians isn't just for Democrats or Republicans to live up to. It is a commitment that we all share.

This budget resolution will empower these Native communities like never before, and it will make our country stronger, safer, and more resilient.

I will be proud to move it forward.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with Senator WARNER of Virginia.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to clarify the provisions in the underlying bill text we are working on this evening.

As we know, cryptocurrency is a digital asset that more and more people are investing in, and we should want that to continue in a healthy and sustainable way. I would like to discuss the provisions in the bill that address information reporting requirements for digital asset brokers.

Under IRS rules, sales or exchanges of assets, like digital assets, give rise to gain or loss in the same manner as sales of securities. Taxpayers who sell stocks or other securities through a broker receive an information return, IRS form 1099-B, that provides information on the gross proceeds and the basis of those sales. Those information returns are prepared by their brokers or custodians or other agents involved in the effecting of the sales.

Today, there is lack of clarity on how these reporting rules apply to digital asset transactions. The underlying bill has two simple provisions to address that.

The cryptocurrency provision in the bill makes it clear as to who counts as a broker within this market. Under the bill, a broker is defined as "any person who (for consideration) is responsible for regularly providing any service effectuating transfers of digital assets on behalf of another person." For tax purposes, this means a sale on behalf of someone else.

The concern has been expressed that some in the cryptocurrency industry who are not brokers would be caught

up in this definition. The Treasury Department, the nonpartisan Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation, and others believe that the current language is clear enough that the reporting requirements only cover brokers. The purpose of this discussion is to further clarify that is the actual intent of the underlying bill. I think that is important.

That is the goal we had in our discussions over a compromise amendment, but, unfortunately, we have been unable to consider and adopt that amendment thus far in this debate.

Some of us were on this floor today, including Senator LUMMIS, Senator WARNER, Senator TOOMEY, myself to try to get that amendment passed, and we were not able to do so.

The purpose of this provision is not to impose new reporting requirements on people who do not meet the definition of brokers. For example, if you are someone who is solely involved with validating distributed ledger transactions through proof of work—commonly known as miners—if you are solely mining, you will not be considered a broker. The same would be true for proof of stake validation and other validation methods now or in the future associated with other consensus mechanisms that are developed and might come into the market as the technology evolves. If you are solely staking your digital assets for the purpose of validating distributed ledger transactions, you will not be considered a broker.

We want to be sure that miners and stakers and others who play a key role in validating transactions now or in the future, or hardware and software sellers for digital wallets, will not be subject to the rules or those activities.

Again, you will need to provide the information reporting only if you are functioning as a broker.

It is my understanding that that is true, and I ask my fellow Finance Committee member and colleague from the bipartisan working group, Senator WARNER, if this is his understanding as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Ohio, who has been such a leader on the underlying bill, and I have been proud to work on this clarification on this critical issue on cryptocurrency.

I thank the Senator, who is correct in his understanding.

I would also like to add some additional clarifications.

The bill ensures that digital asset market players who provide a platform to facilitate digital asset trades by taxpayers will be considered brokers required to report information to the IRS and taxpayers about those transactions.

Reporting entities may be digital asset exchanges or hosted wallet providers, often called custodians, or other agents involved in effectuating digital asset transactions.

The bill recognizes that digital assets are different from stocks and bonds. For example, some taxpayers regularly transfer digital assets between digital asset exchanges or to an off-exchange wallet and then back to an exchange.

Those taxpayers need information returns that link the steps in those chains so they have the complete information they need to prepare their tax returns.

This bill treats digital asset businesses that, for consideration—in effect, money—regularly effect transfers of digital assets as brokers and provides for reporting of digital asset transfers to or by a broker, including in cases where transfer is not directly from one broker to another.

Senator PORTMAN, do you have anything further to add on this item?

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, first of all, I appreciate the clarification by my colleague from Virginia, and, Senator WARNER, you are correct in your understanding.

I would also ask Senator WARNER to clarify the intent of the proposal with respect to the application of the bill to persons solely engaged in the business of validating distributed ledger transactions through proof of work, often called miners.

Am I correct that under our provisions it is our understanding that Treasury and the IRS will not treat these miners as brokers?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, the Senator is entirely correct in his analysis of the application of the bill, and further, I believe, and Treasury has indicated, that this would also be true for individuals engaged in staking their digital assets for the purpose of validating distributed ledger transactions—proof of stake—which we know to be much more environmentally sustainable.

It would also be true for other validation methods associated with other consensus mechanisms, some of which are just coming to market, while others are still in the developmental stage.

People who solely act to validate transactions will not be treated as brokers for those validation activities.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I would ask Senator WARNER to clarify the intent of the Senate in this legislation with respect to persons solely engaged in the business of selling hardware or software that allows people to access their private keys.

Am I correct that these persons would not be treated as brokers under the underlying legislation?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I think the Senator asked a question that has been queried by a number of folks in the media and elsewhere, and the Senator is entirely correct in his analysis of the application of the bill.

Those persons do not effectuate transfers of digital assets and, therefore, would not be treated as brokers.

If you are selling hardware or software for which the only function is to

permit persons to control private keys which are used for accessing digital assets on a distributed ledger, you will not be considered in the business of being a broker.

I also want to say a word about the bipartisan amendment that I worked on with Senators PORTMAN, SINEMA, TOOMEY, and LUMMIS.

I am pleased that we were able to file it today, and I would have hoped that we would have gotten a vote, but I thank them for their diligence and hard work to clarify, in concert with the Treasury Department, this critical section of the bill.

We want to ensure that taxes legitimately owed are paid, and full and accurate transaction reporting is a proven way to make that happen.

We don't, however, want to place reporting requirements on individuals who shouldn't have them.

The amendment memorializes the common understanding that the requirements are to apply only to persons who regularly, and for consideration, effectuate transfers of digital assets.

Persons solely engaged in validating distributed ledger transactions will not be covered for those activities, whether they use proof of work, proof of stake or some other new consensus mechanisms.

Nor will they apply to persons solely engaged in selling hardware or software with the sole function of permitting someone to control private keys used to access digital assets.

Of course, if these entities provide additional services for consideration that would qualify as brokerage, the rules would apply to them as any other broker.

This is an exciting new technology that, in theory, could help bring services to the underserved and reduce costs for everyone. We need, however, to strike the appropriate balance between capturing the promised benefits and guarding against the potential for serious abuse and creation of a shadow financial system beyond the reach of established rules to combat illicit finance and tax evasion.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend and colleague from Virginia for those comments.

Our provisions are designed to bring more clarity and legitimacy to the cryptocurrency industry by more closely aligning the reporting requirements with those of more traditional financial services, and we believe it does just that, and in doing so, will help provide more certainty for people looking to invest in digital assets.

I thank my colleague Senator WARNER for coming to the floor to discuss this important provision.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about Michigan families. Our families are a lot like

families in every other State. Families in Michigan worry about making ends meet. It is something that keeps them up at night a lot of times.

Parents of young children wonder how they will be able to pay for quality childcare. The costs may be as much or more than their rent. I know for my daughter and her husband, it is more than their mortgage payment for their three children. A mom wonders how she will feed her kids healthy meals in the summer when there are no school meals. Parents of older children worry about how they will be able to pay for their college tuition. Seniors in Michigan wonder why their hearing aid or their glasses or their trips to the dentist aren't covered by Medicare right now. They should be. And with our budget, they will be. And they want to know why their medicine is so expensive.

And then we have Michigan farmers diligently planning cover crops for healthier soil while directly battling the effects of the climate crisis and the destruction of their crops, and they need support to help them do more. They want to do more. All of our families wonder if we will be able to tackle the climate crisis in time to save lives and land and jobs. Their worries are our worries.

That is why Democrats are committed to passing the Build Back Better Budget. Let me also say that I congratulate all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have, through their hard work and leadership, brought us to this point of passing part 1 of President Biden's Build Back agenda, which is the bipartisan infrastructure bill, and I am enthusiastically supporting it.

So the Build Back Better Budget is the second piece, and it is focused on keeping historic economic growth going, and it is a game changer for our families. It really is. It is a game changer for our future, and it does four things, simply. It lowers costs for Americans—those things that keep folks up at night when they are trying figure out how to juggle all the costs coming in for themselves or their families.

It is going to cut taxes for American families, continue the biggest—maybe ever—tax cut that has gone to American families that we passed in the American Rescue Plan.

It is going to create millions of jobs while tackling the climate crisis. As we saw the report today, it said what we knew, but we have to be very serious about what comes next here in tackling the climate crisis.

And the great news is this: The great news is that we can cut costs and cut taxes and create millions of jobs and tackle the climate crisis and pay for it. We pay for it just simply by saying that the wealthy will pay their fair share. It is only fair that everybody be contributing to America and everybody be contributing to building back better in our country.

The Build Back Better Budget will cut costs for the things that keep families up at night: the cost of food, childcare, home care, price of medicine, college tuition. For the first time, seniors will be able to have their hearing aids, their glasses, and their dental care that they need covered by Medicare. I know a lot of folks think it already does cover those things. It does not yet, but we want that to happen.

And families will have paid leave when they need it. That is really important because no family should worry that a birth of a child, an illness, or the need to care for an aging parent will leave them in a financial hole that they can never get out of.

Speaking of support for families, about a month ago, Michigan families began to receive monthly help based on the number of children in their family. This is for families across the country. It is a tax cut that was made possible by the American Rescue Plan passed by Democrats in Congress and signed into law by President Biden.

Our families today are receiving up to \$250 a month for each child age 6 to age 17 and up to \$300 for each child under age 6. It is estimated that around 92 percent of Michigan families, that Michigan children will benefit from this tax cut that we passed in the American Rescue Plan.

And the tax cuts in other parts of the American Rescue Plan are now beginning to cut child poverty in half. I will say that again: child poverty in half this year, not 5 years from now, not 10 years from now, this year. What a great thing that we should all be excited about. And it not only helps children and families being lifted out of poverty, but it helps the whole economy. It helps strengthen us as a country.

Unfortunately, when Republicans are in the majority, tax cuts always seem to go to people who need it the least: the wealthy and the well connected. This tax cut is going to people who need it most: American families. And the Build Back Better Budget doubles down on this tax cut, extending this, resulting in one of the largest tax cuts for American families ever, cutting taxes for American families.

The Build Back Better Budget will also create millions of jobs, including in agriculture and rural communities. The Build Back Better Budget will ensure that the United States will not only compete but will lead the world's race toward a clean energy future. And I know our Presiding Officer cares deeply about that and is a leader in that, and it is exciting to see what we can do through this budget.

Currently, Chinese companies produce 60 percent of the parts for wind turbines, 80 percent of solar cells, 80 percent of battery cells, and it is time to bring those jobs home, and there is no reason that we can't. Through the right support and incentives, we can bring those jobs home.

Investing in technology will ensure that these parts are made in America

and will create good-paying American jobs—nearly 2 million jobs per year over the next 10 years. That is 2 million, then 2 million, then 2 million, then 2 million over the next 10 years.

And it will help us address the climate crisis head-on through critical policies and incentives that will reduce U.S. carbon emissions 50 percent by 2030. That is essential.

We are investing in farmers who want to keep leading the charge to combat the climate crisis, while making sure we have the resources to restore our forests, make them more resilient in the face of climate-driven wildfires. We are fulfilling the promise of a climate-smart future by investing in research at land-grant and agricultural universities like my own alma mater, Michigan State University.

The Build Back Better Budget will lower costs for families; it is going to cut their taxes; it is going to create millions of good-paying jobs, while we are tackling the climate crisis. And we simply just have to make sure the wealthiest people in this country step up and are paying their fair share.

Folks in Michigan work really hard to provide for their families. It is time to reward that hard work, not just wealth. It is unacceptable that some of the world's most profitable companies and billionaires pay little or no tax at all; that is despite their profits and their fortunes growing every single year.

Under the Build Back Better Budget, no one who makes under \$400,000 per year will see their taxes go up. Let me say that again. No one under a \$400,000 a year in income will see their taxes go. Instead, the typical American family will see their costs and their taxes go down.

For too long—far too long—when Republican colleagues have been in charge, the wealthy and huge corporations have come first, receiving special treatment over and over again. I think it is about time we put the American people first.

And, by the way, I have heard so many colleagues on the other side of the aisle come to the floor over and over again lamenting that we are going to increase taxes. So for the record, let me just say that I don't think it is increasing taxes to tell a billionaire they have to pay more than zero. And that is what we are talking about here, just people paying their fair share for the majority of Americans in this country who are working hard to have a fair shot to work hard and to make it and to know that somebody is going to have their back. And that is what the Build Back Better Budget is all about.

So let me just say again: It is time to lower costs for the big things that keep families up at night. It is time to cut taxes for American families. It is time to create millions of jobs, which we can do. This is the great news: We can create millions of jobs while tackling the climate crisis, which we must seriously tackle. And it is time for the wealthy

in this country to pay their fair share. Michigan families, families across the country have been waiting long enough. They are ready for us to build back better.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I come to the floor today, first, to talk about the Build Back Better Budget. This is an opportunity for this country to get it right.

For far too long, millionaires and billionaires, corporations in this country have accrued more and more wealth, have paid less and less taxes, while average Americans have seen the cost of living rise, their lives get more difficult, and Washington do virtually nothing about it. We are going to make a huge downpayment in fixing that imbalance.

The Build Back Better Budget, which we will begin considering tomorrow, is going to lower costs for Americans. We are talking about the cost of Medicare, making sure that seniors get a benefit for things like vision and dental; lower the costs for families, like childcare costs.

The Presiding Officer and I are amongst the few parents of relatively young school-age children. We know the cost of childcare today can bankrupt families that don't have the incomes that we do. It is going to cut taxes for American families but the right American families. People who are making \$30,000, \$60,000 a year, that is who needs a tax break, not the millionaires and billionaires.

It is going to create millions of jobs while tackling the climate crisis. Come to Connecticut. We have renewable energy companies building jobs all over our country, but they are having to compete with other nations that are making big investments in climate, which are creating their own renewable energy economies. If somebody is going to capture millions and millions of jobs in wind and solar and geothermal and electric cars, it should be the United States.

Lastly, we are going to pay for this by asking the wealthy to pay their fair share, not more as a percentage of income than anybody else but their fair share. We have corporations, some of the biggest in America, that are paying virtually no taxes today. All of the wealth that is being accumulated by the CEOs of these massive internet companies, virtually untaxed. That has to change. That has to change. I am excited to be a part of this process.

As I said, we have the chance to tackle the climate crisis and create millions of new jobs. We can and have to do both.

You saw the new report challenging us, right? The facts are dire with respect to what has already happened as this planet has warmed. But what that report says is that the next 8 years are critical. The decisions we make in this decade will determine whether there is

a livable planet for our children. That is our obligation. But here is our opportunity: create millions of new jobs.

In Connecticut, we have solar companies, advance battery companies, fuel cell companies, that are just waiting for the U.S. Government to create a market for their technologies in the way that so many other countries around the world are doing.

We have the chance to invest in community violence intervention programs and save lives. This is part of the Build Back Better agenda. President Biden has made it clear that if you want to tackle the epidemic of gun violence in this country, then you have to invest in communities in need.

If you take a look at what drives violence and exposure to violence in this country, the No. 1-correlated factor is income. The poorer you are, the more likely you are to be the victim of violence.

By investing in communities that have high rates of violence—and not, coincidentally, high rates of poverty—you are reducing violence in this Nation.

We have so many examples of programs, like Project Longevity in New Haven and Bridgeport, CT, for example, that show, when you wrap services around a small subset of at-risk families and at-risk young people, you can dramatically lower the rates of violence in this country.

And, by the way, that puts people to work, too, creating these investments in anti-violence programming.

Then we have a chance to transform our rail system and create jobs, speed up our commutes, and address the climate crisis.

And we are making a big downpayment in the bipartisan infrastructure bill, \$66 billion for rail. And I hope to see an additional downpayment in the budget reconciliation process. But investing in rail, it is kind of the Holy Grail because it creates short-term jobs as we rebuild our decrepit rail lines. It speeds up commutes for people. That just makes their lives better, more time with family. But it also creates a lot of economic development potential. Companies want to locate here when they can get their people faster from point A to point B.

Boston to DC is about half the distance as Beijing and Shanghai, but it takes twice the amount of time to get from those two spots in the United States as it does in Asia. We are way behind the curve in investment in high-speed rail, and that is hurting us economically.

But, of course, an investment in rail is also about addressing the climate crisis because the only way to make a dent in transportation emissions is to move people out of cars, especially during the period of time in which we are ramping up the deployment of electric vehicles, and get those individuals into trains, get people out of planes and into trains, especially in a corridor like the Northeast, where the trains

are electrified, right, where these are cleaner trains than in other parts of the country. We have a real opportunity, if we get more people onto trains by investing in them to address the climate crisis.

So I want to just spend a moment, really, telling my colleagues both the responsibility and opportunity that we have. Millionaires, billionaires, and corporations are doing better than ever before in this country. Regular people are hurting. They want a government that is responsive to that. We need to address the huge costs people are having to pay today. We need to cut taxes for regular people. We need to create jobs, solve the climate crisis, and ask those who are doing very well, the top 0.1 percent, to pay their fair share.

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. President, as the Taliban continues this rapid advance into territory that had been controlled by the Kabul-based Afghan Government, there is going to be a lot of hand-wringing in Washington, especially amongst those who cheered our open-ended occupation of Afghanistan for the last 20 years.

Those who opposed President Biden's plan to leave are going to engage in a battery of "I told you so's" and blame the President for the Taliban's march on Kabul.

But the Taliban's surge isn't a reason for the United States to reverse course and put massive troop presence back into the country.

No. The Taliban surge is actually a reason to stick to the withdrawal plan, because the complete, utter failure of the Afghan National Army, absent our hand-holding, to defend their country is a blistering indictment of a failed 20-year strategy predicated on the belief that billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars could create an effective, democratic central government in a nation that has never had one and a Western-modeled army structure populated by troops who are willing to die to preserve a government.

Staying 1 more year in Afghanistan means we stay forever because, if 20 years of laborious training and equipping of the Afghan security forces had this little impact on their ability to fight, then another 50 years wouldn't change anything.

If we choose to keep spending trillions of dollars in Afghanistan until that nation is a fully functioning democracy and their security forces can, by themselves, repel extremist attacks, then we are never ever leaving.

Now, I went to Afghanistan four times in 6 years, from 2007 to 2013. And each time, what struck me most was the heroism, the patriotism, the capability of our soldiers. Too many of them never came home. Too many others came home with injuries that changed their lives. Many of them were from my home State.

But also, each time I went to Afghanistan, I also met with a new, impressive American general who had just recently arrived in country for his short

12-month tour. Each walked me through a PowerPoint presentation detailing how the previous general hadn't made that much progress in training the Afghan security forces and how this general would change course and finally get it right.

This cycle of failure, readjustment, and continued failure must have played out over a dozen times in Afghanistan between our arrival there and the beginning of the Biden administration, and the Taliban took full advantage.

Now, President Trump made a little-noticed decision to stop publicizing the estimates of how much territory the Taliban controlled in Afghanistan, no doubt because the news, especially in the last 5 years, got worse and worse. Yes, the Taliban is moving quickly toward regional capitals right now, but they have been gaining territory for nearly a decade. That trend is just accelerating now.

One repeating mistake was our belief that we could create the Afghan National Army from our own mold. Now, our country's sense of nationalist patriotism, which inspires Americans to put their lives on the line for the flag and what it represents, does not have a corollary in Afghanistan. But we didn't get that.

We had no sense of how competing tribal and ethnic affiliations made creating this common military purpose difficult. And each time our military leaders and our on-the-ground trainers started to learn about these local nuances and started adapting their methods, they were sent home because their deployment was done, and a new deployment of Americans arrived to start from scratch and start making the same mistakes again. Our military leaders are incredibly capable, but we gave them an impossible task.

Our presence in Afghanistan also created a deadly feedback loop where Taliban and terrorist recruiters easily and eagerly scooped up trainees championing at the bit to fight the Americans. For instance, research suggests that in the northwest of Pakistan, where the Taliban and allied groups organized, our drone attacks actually led to increased, not decreased, numbers of Taliban fighters. Bombs falling from pilotless flying machines more often killed innocent civilians instead of enemy combatants, and this simply caused more anger against the United States and our Afghan Government allies and more interest in locals to join the fight against us.

Now, as the Taliban begins to quicken the pace of their assault on Afghan forces, hawks in the United States are going to lead the charge for Biden to reverse course and continue these failed policies of the last 20 years. But to what end?

If the Afghan National Army was so willing to stand aside after 20 years of U.S. investment, why would anything change if we stuck around longer?

Of course, the answer is nothing would change. I know that that is hard

to hear and to accept. Staying longer would just be to admit that American taxpayers have got to foot the bill for a permanent occupation of Afghanistan, to shore up a corrupt government and keep the Taliban at bay.

Now, this isn't wise, mostly because my constituents, understandably, have little interest in putting that much money in Afghanistan when they can't afford groceries or college for their kids or their monthly rent. The Taliban are bad guys, but so are the leaders who rule Turkmenistan or Equatorial Guinea or Kazakhstan or North Korea, amongst others. But we can't afford, as a country, to invade and displace every brutal regime in the world.

Now, what my constituents do care about is preventing another attack on American soil, which is why thousands of our brave men and women in uniform made the ultimate sacrifice fighting in Afghanistan. That is why we went there in the first place. So if spending trillions to fight the Taliban was vitally necessary to this project, then the American public would probably back the investment, but right now it isn't necessary.

U.S. officials believe al-Qaida in Afghanistan is no longer capable of carrying out attacks against the United States. We are talking about 200 to 400 al-Qaida fighters in Afghanistan today. Now, this is likely because the Taliban is seeking a less contentious relationship with the United States and, therefore, has promised to deny al-Qaida a safe haven.

Now, I get it. Assurances from the Taliban are of very limited value, but our intelligence collection on al-Qaida is good enough to be able to monitor the Taliban's compliance and adjust accordingly.

Now, I understand how difficult it is to watch the Afghan National Army refuse to defend its territory, to watch the Taliban move so quickly into provincial capitals. I understand how infuriating it must be for families who lost loved ones in Afghanistan to see these gains be eliminated so quickly.

But let's understand, finally, what would have happened if President Biden had chosen to keep 2,500 troops in Afghanistan. Twenty-five hundred troops is not a sufficient number to repel this offensive. Our military leaders have been crystal clear that a minimum of 8,500 troops are required to provide any modicum of support necessary to keep the Taliban's gains to a crawl.

That is how many troops were there at the beginning of Trump's term, but as part of his agreement with the Taliban, he drew down the numbers to 2,500, a force size completely inadequate to stop any Taliban advance. And the only reason why those 2,500 soldiers didn't get overrun by the Taliban is because, as part of the Trump-Taliban agreement, the Taliban promised to hold off on attacks until the United States had withdrawn.

So if President Biden decided to keep our open-ended mission to support the Afghan military against the Taliban, he would have had to surge troop levels back to 8,500. Every single troop in Afghanistan costs over \$1 million a year. Now, never mind the complete unwillingness of the American public to support yet another Afghanistan troop surge; the cost of this escalation would have just been indefensible.

The Afghan military, on paper, is far superior a fighting force to the Taliban. The Afghan National Army has approximately three times the number of soldiers. The Afghan National Army has an air force. The Taliban doesn't. The Afghan National Army's equipment and weapons—thanks to the United States—are much more sophisticated and deadly. The United States trains that force. We pay their salaries. We support them.

But despite this advantage, despite 20 years and trillions of dollars of investment, they are losing to the ragtag Taliban badly. This isn't a reason for the United States to reescalate. This is evidence of the wisdom and courage of President Biden's decision to withdraw.

Our counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan is going to remain, but we should refuse, as a nation, to remain in forever wars that don't make our Nation safer.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Massachusetts.

BUDGET RECONCILIATION

Mr. MARKEY. Madam President, I rise to speak about the \$3.5 trillion budget resolution that will cut costs for American families, provide our seniors with comprehensive healthcare, and finally take the much-needed and long-overdue action to protect ourselves, our future, and our existence from the climate crisis.

Our urgency in action must be as fierce as the crisis on our shores, in our cities, and in our States across America. The climate deniers are out of excuses, and we are out of time.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its sixth assessment report. The new warning from the U.N., from the IPCC, is actually code red. They are saying that the planet is in great danger, that our country is in great danger if we do not respond to the climate crisis. And now the challenge for this Senate, for this country, is whether or not we are going to respond. And we are.

The code red warning from the United Nations is going to have a code green response from the U.S. Senate in the \$3.5 trillion package.

We will invest in the technologies that will make it possible for us to respond to this dire warning from the United Nations, a warning that reaffirms what we are seeing and suffering right now across our country: Climate change is going to continue to cost us lives and livelihoods if we don't respond with the scope and the scale that this moment demands.

The report says our responsibility is unequivocal. The effects of the climate crisis are unprecedented, and we have an undeniable need to act. From increasing intensity and frequency of extreme heat to catastrophic precipitation and devastating droughts, no community will be able to hide from the most dire impacts of our human-driven climate crisis.

This report must be the final warning that we must respond. And right now we are preparing, as Senate Democrats, a budget resolution that will be our best opportunity to respond to the code red warning we have received today from the United Nations, from the climate experts of the planet.

That is our challenge, but we are going to have resistance. We have to basically sweep away this rising tide of cynicism that we hear from climate deniers, from the fossil fuel industry, and from too many Republicans.

Senate Democrats are ready to forge ahead. This budget resolution is our opportunity to prevent the most alarming consequences of the climate crisis and equip ourselves to survive the climate impacts we cannot avoid. With policies to drive deep cuts in emissions, protect communities, provide equity and justice to overburdened communities, we can respond to overwhelming evidence and take the necessary action to save our people and our planet.

We have received the final warning. We now have the best opportunity any Congress has ever had to respond. That legislation will be on the floor of the Senate in the next 2 days.

As chair of the Clean Air, Climate, and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee of the Environment and Public Works Committee, I am ready to get to work and turn this budget resolution into legislative action. This vital investment will build on what we have already done, adding on climate, equity, and even more good-paying union jobs.

We can save all of creation by engaging in massive union job creation.

We can fund a clean-energy accelerator that uses innovative, flexible financing to lower our emissions and create jobs with public dollars that can deploy and leverage private investment. This accelerator will unleash clean energy generation, energy-efficient retrofits, and opportunities in communities across our country.

We can fund environmental justice mapping efforts to understand the burdens of affected communities and direct our investments and our programs accordingly. We can provide the funding and support to monitor and to address the dangers of extreme heat, toxic chemicals, and polluted air.

We can create a civilian Climate Corps and put millions of people to work on projects to protect our communities from climate impacts, support local projects, and get trained and get to work in building our clean energy economy. We must ensure that these jobs have high standards, pre-

vailing wages, and just recruiting and hiring practices.

And in this legislation that responds to the code red climate threat, we will have the tax breaks. The oil, gas, and coal industry, for a hundred years, have had their control over tax breaks coming out of this Congress. Well, in this bill, we are going to have the tax breaks for wind and for solar and for all-electric vehicles and for battery storage technologies. We are going to have the tax breaks for the solution to the climate crisis.

This is the moment. This is what the world is waiting to see from our country. If we are going to lead, we cannot preach temperance from a barstool. We have to step up and do the right thing and create the innovation economy that will save our country and save the world.

And we can kick start a clean energy revolution. And, not only that, we can ensure that we have a revolution that is made in America—jobs here, union jobs here, good-paying jobs here, in the United States.

We are going to have a domestic manufacturing revolution that we have not seen in a generation, and we are going to do it in the green budget resolution that we are going to bring out onto the floor of the Senate in the next 2 days.

The answer to our clean future is blowing in the wind. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to save our people and our planet by going bigger and bolder than ever before.

Senate Democrats are going to deliver real results for Americans: for our seniors, our children, our families, our working people across our country.

As Massachusetts' own Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "the first wealth is health." And this budget makes sure Americans' healthcare and futures are a priority second to none.

Under our budget resolution, every child—regardless of their ZIP Code—will have the opportunity attend pre-K. Every teen will be able to reimagine their future with the ability to enroll tuition-free in community colleges across our country.

And I will be fighting to provide critical broadband connectivity support to ensure educational success for all students at home, especially poor children, Black, Brown, immigrant children in our country.

And thanks to this budget, Medicare will now cover essentials like hearing aids, eyeglasses, and dental care for our seniors for the first time ever—covered by Medicare. Millions of women will be brought into the workforce when we provide accessible and affordable childcare for American families. And we will expand the child tax credit and make the child and dependent care tax credit permanent in our country—permanent tax relief for every family with a child in our country.

And we will do all of this by paying for all of these investments, unlike Republicans who put tax cuts for the

wealthy on the American taxpayers' dime. We will do this without any American making under \$400,000 paying a single cent more in taxes and asking, instead, for the ultrawealthy and the big corporations—including Big Oil and Big Gas—to pay more of their fair share, like workers and small businesses have always done in our country.

These are the investments that will restack the deck in our country, level the playing field, and set in motion a more just future where every child and every family has the opportunity to achieve the American dream.

The second train is finally about to pull into the station. Progressive champions in the House of Representatives are doing an incredible job holding the line to ensure that this resolution is passed alongside the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

But as we recover from the multiple crises we face, we cannot accept to return to the status quo—a status quo that has left too many people behind in our country.

Over the last several months, we have worked tirelessly to deliver for Americans COVID relief, an expanded child tax credit, \$7 billion for broadband access, support for students and families, and much more.

Now we need to pass this \$3.5 trillion package and not a cent less to push forward and create a more just and livable future for every person in our country. That is what this moment demands.

And I look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this budget resolution this week and taking the first steps to ensure this future is guaranteed for every child and family across our country.

We can do it for families. We can do it for our planet. That is what our agenda has to be for the remainder of this week. And I think if we respond, we will have become one of the greatest Congresses that has ever served in the history of our country.

I yield back to you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. PETERS. Madam President, I rise today to highlight the incredible opportunity before us to build on the strong foundation laid in the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act through the Build Back Better budget.

The bipartisan infrastructure bill will make historic investments that will help create good-paying American jobs, upgrade our roads and our bridges, improve access to high-speed internet, and so much more.

With the Build Back Better budget, we have the opportunity to go beyond these initial, long overdue investments and take strong action to help secure our future for generations to come. This budget will provide crucial tax cuts to hard-working American families and tackle some of the toughest challenges they are facing, like the cost of childcare, prescription drugs,

and the lack of family leave that is paid.

This budget will create good-paying American jobs by incentivizing the development of new clean power sources that simply cannot be outsourced. We will finally confront the very serious and very real threat posed to our economic and national security by climate change.

As chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, I am working to ensure that the budget resolution makes critical payments to electrify the Federal Government's vehicle fleet, including the U.S. Postal Service's delivery vehicles. Not only will this set us on a path to a more sustainable future; it helps grow America's domestic manufacturing sector. Thanks to these investments, American workers and companies will have greater opportunity to build and assemble the battery cells, electric drive trains, and other auto parts right here in the United States.

In addition to creating great jobs, we will strengthen our domestic supply chains, reduce our dependence on foreign producers, and lead the world in advancing clean electric vehicle technologies.

This is especially an important investment at a time when we are seeing the effects of climate change ravage communities all across our country. From devastating wildfires out West to severe flooding in Michigan and across the Midwest, to destructive hurricanes along the gulf and east coast, we simply cannot wait any longer to address the impacts of climate change.

Just today, the United Nations climate panel released a landmark report on climate change, calling it a "code red" situation for the survival of our planet.

This budget will help limit further harmful pollution from greenhouse gases and fossil fuels that are contributing to this worldwide crisis by making important down payments on clean energy.

While we invest in transformative technology to help secure our future, we also need to deal with the natural disasters that communities are facing right now. We must protect American families and businesses from the consequences of increasingly severe storms, floods, and fires by making important investments in disaster mitigation efforts.

We must help communities reduce the impact of severe disasters by addressing rising water levels, improving flood prevention and storm water management efforts, and strengthening wildfire mitigation efforts. These climate-change driven threats are destroying homes, small businesses, and communities in every corner of the United States, and this budget will ensure that we take swift action and better secure our future and limit further destruction.

Finally, this budget will also make historic investments to tackle one of

the fastest growing threats to our national security—cyberattacks from foreign adversaries and criminal organizations. We must secure critical infrastructure, support State and local governments in their efforts to increase cyber security, and overhaul outdated and insecure Federal networks.

Over the past year, we have seen time and time again how vulnerable information networks can be. Attacks on everything from K-12 schools and small businesses to major oil pipelines and Agencies across the Federal Government have played out on the front page of newspapers across our country. Whether we are talking about our critical infrastructure or our Federal Government, we simply cannot wait any longer to fix these serious problems.

Targeted investments in new information technology will not only improve our cybersecurity defenses but will also help increase efficiency, reduce energy consumption, and save taxpayer dollars.

Cybersecurity investments will help defend our information networks against further intrusions and breaches, protect our national security, prevent Americans' personal information from being stolen, and help reduce attacks that could threaten our very way of life.

These are just a few of the critical down payments we will be making with the Build Back Better budget. Now is the time to take on some of the biggest challenges that are facing American families. Whether it is working to lower costs, improving access to healthcare, or ensuring our communities can weather the next major storm or major cyberattack, the Build Back Better budget will help ensure that we are securing the future that we want for future generations of Americans.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MERKLEY. Madam President, I am here on the floor today to talk about climate chaos. It is a monumental crisis that requires immediate and bold action.

The reason I am speaking about climate chaos at this moment is because several things are happening today that create this connection. The one is that the IPCC, the International Panel on Climate Change, has released its 2021 climate report, and the second is, we are in the middle of talking about infrastructure for our Nation, and the investments in climate infrastructure are going to be critical to take on the crisis that we are facing.

We are in pretty big trouble. This report that came out today—"5 Big Findings from the IPCC's 2021 Climate Report"—it lays out how dramatically

things have shifted in just a few years. It notes that the concentration of carbon dioxide is now higher than it has been for 2 million years, and we have made that happen over just the last 100 or so years but particularly the last 30; that the glacial retreat is unmatched for the last 2,000 years; that the last decade was warmer than any period for 125,000 years; that the summer Arctic ice coverage is smaller than at any time in the last 1,000 years; that the ocean is warming faster than at any time since the last ice age; and that ocean acidification is at the highest level in the last 26,000 years.

These things would not have been true a few years ago, and it is because of the massive buildup in carbon dioxide from our burning of fossil fuels to power our energy economy, and it is from the massive release of methane gas because of our use of natural gas, which is a very nice name for what is mostly methane gas. We collect methane gas, and we have accelerated that through fracking. A tremendous amount leaks out through that drilling and fracking system. A tremendous amount more leaks out through the millions of miles of pipes that carry it to its destinations, and then when we burn it, it creates carbon dioxide, also a global warming gas.

So we don't need to really get this report to know we are in trouble because we just have to look at the facts on the ground from our home States right now. I mean, Oregon is aflame. We have so many fires burning simultaneously, and the largest fire is over 400,000 acres—400,000 acres. Think how long it would take, if you were on a hike, to pass through 400,000 acres.

You know, a few years ago, we had a group of homes that were burned out in John Day, OR, some 24 or so homes, and we thought that was a big deal. Then last summer, we had six towns burn to the ground, completely incinerated. Now we have these massive, massive fires, as do Idaho and Montana and Washington State and California State and Colorado and Utah and New Mexico, Arizona. The West is aflame because the temperatures are so much higher.

What else is happening in Oregon? Well, our snowpack is disappearing; average snowpack is decreasing. It is affecting the amount of irrigation water we have. It is affecting the fact that our streams are now smaller and warmer than they were before, affecting our trout and our salmon, and the ocean is acidifying. Now we have some 30 percent more acid in the ocean. It affected first the reproduction of our oysters, so now we artificially buffer the water for our oyster scene to survive, baby oysters to survive. Now it is starting to affect the Dungeness crab, one of the most significant financial enterprises in terms of sea life production in a commercial sense off the coast of Oregon. So we are seeing impacts in every possible way.

I know that as I travel rural Oregon, people emphasize that this is a huge

impact on rural Oregon and rural America because it is affecting our farming. It is affecting our fishing, and it is affecting our forests.

So we are engaged here in a two-part plan. The first plan is an infrastructure bill that address water, transportation, and broadband. Well, all well and good, but if part one sails away from the dock and leaves part two stranded, what is left behind? Housing, massive investment; education, a massive investment in 2 years of preschool and 2 years of community college. Foundations for thriving families are left behind, the support for daycare for working families; and the child tax credit, which is lifting half of the children in poverty out of poverty in America—the most massive tax cut ever envisioned for middle-class America.

What other thing is left on the dock? The investment in climate; the transition from burning fossil fuel, the fossil fuel economy, to the renewable energy economy.

We cannot let part one sail away of the infrastructure bill without doing part two, and the report from the IPCC today emphasizes how absolutely important it is that we act and we act boldly. That report said it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, the ocean, and the land. The report, crafted by 200 global scientists, concludes, as one of the report's coauthors summarizes:

There is no uncertainty language in this sentence because there is no uncertainty that global warming is caused by human activity and the burning of fossil fuels.

The report goes on to say that we are now on an irreversible course towards a hotter planet; that if we do the severest cuts in carbon emissions right now, the severest cuts, we are still going to see temperatures rise 1½ degrees Celsius or about 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit. That was the goal of the Paris Agreement. We would have to massively cut our carbon emissions and our methane emissions right now to meet the Paris target.

The report goes on to say that extreme weather events, which were rare or completely unprecedented, will now be common and more common as we approach the new normal or it becomes a new normal because of climate change.

I think the U.N. Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, summed it up when he said this report is “a code red for humanity”—“a code red for humanity.” So that is why all 100 of us here in the Senate should be on the floor discussing how to respond to a code red for humanity.

Wow, we have a lot of work to do, but that first part of the package has nothing in it or almost nothing in it—a little bit of money for charging stations, a little bit of money for electric buses, a little bit of money for improving the electric grid, but nothing like the massive investment that is required to respond to a code red, a code red for the planet.

Now, clearly, as the planet gets hotter and it is affecting our forests and our farming and our fishing—forest fires that are destroying towns, more powerful hurricanes affecting the seashore, more intrusion of saltwater into freshwater supplies—cities are having to basically start to build dikes around themselves in order to keep the seawater out.

I heard one Member of the Senate say: You know, here is the thing. We shouldn't do anything about this because the investments required to take on climate change will be disruptive.

Well, I will tell you what is disruptive. Forest fires are disruptive. The loss of the snowpack for our winter sports and our irrigation water and our healthy streams, that is disruptive. Sea life being damaged by ocean acidification, that is disruptive to our economy. Forests with pine beetles thriving and trees dying, that is disruptive to our forestry. Lack of rain, such that the groundwater is not recharged, is disruptive to our irrigation for our ranchers and our farmers.

What is disruptive is doing nothing, and the damage will far exceed the cost of taking an honest effort to transition quickly to renewable energy.

Failing to act means failing our future generations. We cannot allow that to happen. So that is why I am so pleased that on the same day that the IPCC released their report, we also saw the budget resolution released.

Now, the budget resolution is the second half of the package, the part that addresses families, that addresses forests, that addresses housing, that addresses children, and, yes, addresses climate. So there is hope.

And what does it do? Well, it funds the Civilian Conservation Corps to put Americans to work in good-paying jobs to help conserve our Nation's public lands and waters and bolster community resilience and to advance environmental justice.

It establishes the Energy Efficiency and Clean Electricity Standard that my colleague from Minnesota, who is presiding over the Senate right now, has been so instrumental in laying out for the Senate to act on. That clean electricity standard will have an enormous impact because to escape the fossil fuel energy economy, we have to electrify everything on the production end. We take the power off the grid, but we have to put renewable energy onto the grid. So it is the key. It is the centerpiece—the centerpiece—of how we act.

And there are a lot of subsidies, yes, for things like electric buses and also for electric vehicles. And I think it is so exciting that we now are going to have an F-150 electric. And the F-150 electric goes from zero to 60 miles per hour in 4.4 seconds. Try that with your fossil fuel car, my friend, because you will fail. But you get the new Ford F-150, and it will press you back in the seat like you have never experienced as you take off, and you can still do your

industrial work with your pickup. And there is a Ford Mustang coming on, electric, and that is going to be a hot item, an exciting item as well. And so it is kind of neat that what is good for the environment is also going to be good for all of us to have a good time driving.

So all of these pieces that are in the second half—the second half of the infrastructure package—that has to get done, and it should be absolutely bipartisan because these investments in families are desired by Democratic families and Republican families and Independent families. These investments in housing—affordable housing in our country—are needed by Republican and Democratic and Independent families.

And you know what? It is going to be completely paid for—completely paid for by having the megarich pay their fair share. And as you all know from all the reports, they have been jumping and diving and ducking their taxes, many of them paying zero. Billionaires who are putting themselves into space on a joy ride pay zero in taxes. Billionaires are using tons of the products of what we paid for of our road infrastructure and our water infrastructure and our education infrastructure. They are employing all kinds of folks who are funded by Pell grants to get through college, paying zero—zero—in taxes.

Why are the billionaires paying less than you and me? Why are they paying less than the clerk at the grocery store or the person bagging your groceries? Why are they paying less than the secretaries? Why are they paying less in taxes, the billionaires? Good question.

It shouldn't be the case. So the responsible thing is to pay for the package with tax fairness for all Americans, everyone doing their fair share, including our companies, some of which have posted tremendous, astronomical profits while paying absolutely zero in taxes.

If we turn the clock back to Henry David Thoreau, who said many interesting things in his book, "On Walden Pond," and one of the things he said is, "What is the use of a house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?"

Well, his question was kind of looking toward the future that we are now in, where the ravages of a heated planet are destroying our forests, our fishing, and our farming, undermining the foundations of our rural economy, creating storms that assault our shores, creating fires that burn down houses and towns as well as trees.

It is time for us to act, and to act boldly, because we are under a red alert for the planet and we need to act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

BUDGET RESOLUTION

Mr. HAGERTY. Madam President, as I said earlier in this debate, I agree that working to shore up our hard infrastructure is a worthy cause. Investing in infrastructure the right way is a

wise investment in America's future and in our long-term competitiveness.

But that is not what we are being asked to vote on here. Rather, we have a package with some infrastructure that is good for our economy. Yet it is riddled with Big Government and massive deficit spending, over a quarter of a trillion dollars in the hole.

And we want to rush through this as quickly as possible?

There is a right way and a wrong way to pursue noble goals. And let's be clear. The Democrat leadership has tied this infrastructure bill to their effort to use their 50-vote reconciliation process to fundamentally move America toward Western Europe-style socialism, which as anyone can see today, brings with it limited opportunity, less innovation, crushing taxes, a bloated government bureaucracy, and cradle-to-grave government dependency.

Right on cue, Democrats have introduced a \$3.5 trillion part of the plan this morning, and the Democrat leader promised that the Senate will turn to it just as soon as this bill is passed.

I wish this wasn't the case. And all it would take for it not to be the case is for just one of my Democrat colleagues to say that they won't support the \$3.5 billion part of this plan.

I am still hopeful, but I remain concerned, given the statements by Democrats just like my colleague, who just spoke a minute ago, from Oregon.

President Biden and Speaker PELOSI have been clear that this bipartisan deal on infrastructure won't become law unless all of the socialist Big Government items that got excluded from the so-called track 1 of the first deal are later tacked on to it in track 2 of their plan. The Democrat leader is saying this quite clearly, using the consistent refrain of a two-track plan.

They are doing this because the far left has pushed the Democrats over the edge. Whether the subject is court packing, election takeovers, or government dependency, it is clear that the far left is calling the shots in the Democratic Party today.

Sadly, Democrats view this infrastructure bill as an important tool to advance the far left's agenda. Democrat leaders have promised to link it to trillions of dollars more in government taxing, spending, and dependency programs that this body will take up later this week. This smoke-and-mirrors charade is the kind of thing that makes Americans shake their heads.

I have negotiated deals my whole career, and often what is negotiated out of a deal is just as important as what is in it. There is not a deal if, at the last minute, the other side uses a side deal or a different program to put everything in it that you never wanted. That is why, when we consider this infrastructure bill, we must also look to the multitrillion-dollar, tax-and-spend path to socialism that the Democrat leaders have promised will be part of the total package. So Members of this

body and the American people need to listen carefully to what is expected to be in this second part of the plan and try not to let your jaw hit the floor in the process.

Just listen to what Democrats are promising to stuff into this reconciliation bill. It will enable the Green New Deal. It will crush the American fossil fuel industry—never mind the fact that the industry is continuing to become ever more industry clean on its own.

This will cost millions of American jobs. It will sacrifice the energy independence we have already achieved, and it will make us more dependent on foreign adversaries. Ultimately, Democrats would rather placate the far left's near-religious fervor for government-subsidized electric cars and windmills, even if it means hollowing out American communities that provide our energy independence today.

And they will jeopardize our national security in the process. It is a great deal for the green energy lobby which supports Democrat politicians, but it is a terrible deal for our Nation and for our national security.

It will drastically increase taxes on job creators, which will cost untold number of jobs and reduce wages. Get ready to see more jobs shipped out of the United States and into the welcoming arms of China. Don't worry, though, Democrats are proposing to create a Civilian Climate Corps that will hire some of the people who lose their jobs. To do what? Proselytize on the virtues of clean energy?

It will impose one of the largest ever tax increases on American capital, resulting in America having one of the highest tax rates on investment and capital in the industrialized world. Capital investment creates new jobs and innovation, and this will crush that process in America.

It will expand the death tax that Americans must pay on savings and property of their loved ones that pass away. It will make it much harder for small businesses and farms to be passed on to the next generation.

It will move America closer to a European socialist model for healthcare, with less choice, longer wait times, and less quality. If we have learned anything during the coronavirus pandemic, it is that we have the greatest healthcare system and healthcare workers in the world. The last thing we need to do is try to make our healthcare system weaker.

It will nullify the State right-to-work laws and ensure American workers don't have a choice but to submit to union bosses. It is impossible to say how many good-paying jobs this will cost States like Tennessee, States that have experienced enormous growth and prosperity in recent decades by passing laws that put workers first by allowing them to choose whether or not they want to join a union. But union dues are used to fund Democrat political campaigns. So rather than make unions earn the support of workers, Democrats want to mandate it.

At a time when American small businesses are desperately looking for employees, this legislation will provide even more incentives for American workers not to work. Small businesses and American consumers will suffer as a result.

It will provide more handouts to teachers unions who have refused to open schools in much of the country for the last year and a half. Teachers unions provide a great windfall benefit to Democrat political campaigns.

It will provide more handouts to green unions and green energy interests, which conveniently fund the campaigns of Democrat politicians.

Are you noticing a trend yet?

In addition to taking more American taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, it will be debt-financed and not paid for, at least not by our generation. It may be convenient for today's politicians, but our children and grandchildren will be left footing the bill. It will be so large that it will likely be beyond the capacity of Congress to even oversee it to prevent the waste, fraud, and abuse that are sure to come.

We should all be deeply concerned.

Ultimately, this package is designed to create a permanent state of government dependency and reliance for everything from jobs to your choice of doctors, to fueling your car. That way, you will have to turn to the institution Democrats have captured most: government and the unelected bureaucracy that controls virtually everything.

In the short term, this is a reckless, multitrillion-dollar step toward socialism—again, several trillion dollars. That is 13 digits, a number that many calculators don't even have room for. This step will likely add further fuel to already rampant inflation.

As we know, inflation is a hidden tax on all Americans, cutting into our savings, decreasing real earnings, and hurting our retirees most of all.

Over the longer term, this path to socialism will slow job creation and productivity. It will reduce wages. It will ship jobs overseas. It will harm small businesses and workers and freeze investment right here in America. It will drastically increase taxes, and it will hobble innovative industries and technologies in which America was poised to lead. And Green New Deal mandates and regulations will crush industries where we currently do lead, such as the energy industry.

With this massive expansion of inefficient government, bureaucratic government in our day-to-day lives will increase. It is as if Democrats' goal is to emulate the totalitarian central planners of the Chinese Communist Party. Rather than competing against China by creating a free market-driven environment for innovation and job creation, which, by the way, is how we won the Cold War, Democrats seem to want to copy China's model.

This tax-and-spend spree by Democrats will also burden our children and

grandchildren with even more debt. Sadly, this isn't a pig-in-a-python moment, and the harmful effects of this spending spree will last for generations.

America is nearly \$30 trillion in debt—\$30 trillion. Thirty trillion is significantly more than the total value of what our economy produces annually. As Democrats impose policies that will limit economic growth and productivity, our ability to pay our debts will become much more difficult. As the debt payments we owe continue to increase and become a larger and larger share of the Federal revenue pie, we are going to leave our children with some really tough choices.

So while I support hard infrastructure and working to find a right way to invest in it, joining it at the hip with a vision for America as a socialist utopia isn't it. The stakes are too high, and it is time to get serious about the path we are heading down. We must think beyond today and our short-term interests. We need to stop endangering our children's and our grandchildren's future while we still can, by getting our spending under control and developing a plan for paying down our debt, not by making it far worse.

This multitrillion-dollar path to socialism threatens the future of our country. It not only threatens to leave our children with an unpayable debt, but it also limits their ability to pay it off by smothering our economy with massive government bureaucracy that stifles the private-sector innovation that has until now led the world.

America has always been a beacon of hope for the world because we are exceptional. We have provided more freedom, opportunity, and prosperity than any other nation. We have been proud of this exceptionalism and have carefully safeguarded it through generations.

The strength of America is our unique system—our spirit, our work ethic, our compassion, and the communities we create. This multitrillion-dollar plan, which increases government control and decreases freedom and opportunity, threatens the system at our core.

Our government exists to preserve the freedoms that allow the American people and our communities to flourish, not to control the American people. And the American people will flourish, if permitted to do so. In this sense, the only thing that can stop America is America's government by limiting our own people's opportunity and our prosperity.

I am asking my colleagues to fight to ensure that the America that we know endures for our children. The "greatest generation" gave us the most just and prosperous country in the history of the world, the country that won World War II and then the Cold War, and we must fight to preserve it, not throw it away.

Because the President and Democratic leaders have bound this infra-

structure bill to a plan that will dramatically weaken America and reduce opportunity and prosperity for our people, I will be casting a "no" vote and urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. SCHUMER. Well, it has taken quite a while. There have been a lot of bumps in the road. But in a few minutes, I will announce that we have come to an agreement for final passage of the bipartisan infrastructure proposal.

Let me say this: It has taken quite a long time, and there have been detours and everything else, but this will do a whole lot of good for America, and the Senate can be proud it has passed this.

As we move forward, we are proceeding on both tracks, the track of the bipartisan infrastructure proposal and the track of the budget resolution with reconciliation instructions. On our side of the aisle, we know we need both tracks—one dealing with traditional infrastructure and one dealing with climate and the problems American families face as they move into the new, global, transformational 21st century.

So this is a very good day. We have come to an agreement after all the long, hard negotiating, the stops and starts. We are here, and it is a good thing—a very good thing—for America.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 266, 269, 325, 343, 316, and 326; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening or action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the nominations en bloc.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nominations of Samuel T. Walsh, of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy; Mara Elizabeth Karlin, of Wisconsin, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense; Rena Bitter, of the District of Columbia, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Consular Affairs); Carol E. Spangler, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army; Jennifer L. Homendy, of Virginia, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of three